













# Travelling with Kim's gang

Alan Hollinghurst

WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS  
The Place of Dead Roads  
306pp. John Calder. £9.95.  
07145 40307

The Place of Dead Roads is reached a few pages from the end of William Burroughs's new novel; to get there we take a long and dislocated journey from St Louis, Mo., via New York, London, Paris, Tangier and the planet Venus, travelling in time as well, between the 1890s and the latter months of the current year. It is a dizzying, sickening and ill-planned journey, and ostentatiously so; its global rangings teach us nothing about the world (or indeed about Venus), and observation, with extensive view, surveys not mankind but one man: William S. Burroughs.

The Dead Roads that meet at the Place are the roads leading away from the author's past addresses - Jane Street, calle Larachi, Tangier, Arundel Terrace, SW13 - roads he will never use again. Burroughs is seventy now, and the habitual nostalgia of his writing, with its recurrent memories of his St Louis adolescence, is sharpened here with an abhorrence of age, gruesomely exemplified in vignettes of Somerset Maugham and Beau Brummell, seen in their final squalid loss of self-control.

Kim Carsons, the novel's protagonist, is a further and more autobiographical manifestation of the Audrey Carsons of *The Wild Boys* and *Exterminator!* - a morbid, clever, obscene, sex-obsessed, malodorous, unliked youth. Though he shares characteristics with Burroughs (both are likened to a "sheep-killing dog"), his kinship to the author is more tellingly revealed in the collusive, manipulative way he is handled. His name itself is said to be a pseudonym of William Seward Hall (they are Burroughs's forenames), and his incarnations have the convenient multiplicity of fantasy. Kim is an ideally powerful agent sent out imaginatively by the ageing Burroughs into a corrupt world; by his shape-changing and trans-mogrifications he remains ever young and invincible; his psychopathic deeds are exercises of the author's savage indignation and kinky humour. And having given him preternatural skill and acuity, Burroughs cannot resist entering the story himself, speaking suddenly in the first person as a member of Kim's gang, secreting himself within the legend he has created.

This legend describes Kim's mobilizing of dissident elements in society to eliminate a self-righteous, religious, dogmatic and industrial establishment. At one level the plan, gory and vengeful, is adolescent and absurd; but at another it assumes an ingenious and satirical logic. Based on the premise that humans only work to one-fifth of their potential, it advocates decentralization of power, the co-opting of resources, intelligent assessment, the tapping of latent energy, *Vespertina* or self-awareness. Between these levels there is ideological strife: mind-expanding freedom from constraint is sought through means of totalitarian violence. The political terror, like all aspects of Burroughs's work, is the scene of bafflingly personal struggles; which, though illogical and obscure, are pre-empted with a surrealistic conviction that they make sense.

In fact they depend on magic. Kim is schooled in various occult and supersensory systems; Joe, the Dead teaches him survival tricks and gives him a protective amulet of the Cat Goddess Bast. The Carsons gang, the Wild Boys, thrive through shape-changing and, like the Wild Boys of the earlier novel, seek an asexual means of reproduction; their success as assassins depends on their brilliance at dissimulation and their training with weapons. In all this, traditional adolescent literature undergoes a perverse and relaxed corruption: the Western and the fairy-tale are redeployed to sinister ritual ends. Cullis, tallamante power accrues to guns, knives, clothes, sexual acts, gestures have unspoken significances; ordinary words are codes. There are occasions when the effect is very similar to the "Journal of an African" in Auden's *Orators*; a resemblance identified by Burroughs's use of a virus as the carrier of the church-going self-righteousness of the enemy. "A page from the *Denver Post* passed through the mind," says Burroughs, "and it was like a virus."

Two main characters emerge from the squalor of this initial travel. With her two monotonous children, Jamie is trying to escape a marriage gone wrong, back in Oakland. There are relatives of some sort (two new ones in his life) and a record of past life.

panicked by mysterious dog deaths . . . Most attempts at germ warfare, in fact, start with animal diseases like glanders, parrot fever, anthrax . . . P.S.: We could give it to them at their deadly church suppers." Kim keeps a diary in which sex-scenes are entered in code. At its witliest - and there are pages of unpredictable brio - Burroughs's writing here claims descent from Auden's symptomatic riddles, his "handsome and dissexed youngsters" spreading their rumour horrifying in its capacity to disgust.

But Burroughs's writing is not, and has never aimed to be, so compact and laconic a medium. Its natural tendency is to virulent excess; though *The Naked Lunch* stands out for its mordant and prodigious invention, Burroughs's *oeuvre* tends to blur in retrospect, an effect intensified by the recurrence of characters and the obsessive repetitions of subject-matter. There is, for example, a set of phrases of erotic nostalgia - "late afternoon light", "drifting smoke", "phantom train whistles from lonely sidings", "whiff of carrion" - which Burroughs has told like a rosy in book after book: unpunctuated, trance-like, they reappear time and again in *The Place of Dead Roads*. And the descriptions of boys and sex, though uncontrollably frequent, revolve a minute repertoire of words and phrases with an effect that is both haunting and tiring.

## A bit on the wild side

David Montrose

CHARLES BUKOWSKI  
Hot Water Music  
225pp. Black Sparrow Press, P.O. Box 3993,  
Santa Barbara, California 93130. \$14  
(paperback, \$8.50).  
087685 597 4

Although not an exclusively autobiographical writer, the prolific Charles Bukowski has always drawn heavily on personal experience for his poems, stories, and novels; certainly, the presence of Bukowski himself, usually in the transparent disguise of "Henry Chinaski", has normally been a feature of his better work. Fortunately, an eventually mispent adulthood supplied a fund of experience rich in potential. Bukowski's uses of it were, admittedly, wildly uneven in quality, but, at his best, notably in various early stories, he reproduced the squalor and violence of low-life L.A. with the dirtiest of dirty realism. In 1970, aged fifty and with an emerging reputation, Bukowski became a full-time writer. Significantly, though, his most impressive work still derived from the preceding period of his life. But, by the mid-1970s, this source had worn thin. That the new material available - Bukowski's career as a minor literary celebrity - carried much less substance was strikingly illustrated by his third novel, *Women*, a fragmentary account of his life since 1970 that was little more than a self-

*The Place of Dead Roads* shows clearly this obsessive, snagged attention to narrow stress; the prolonged verbal dwelling on the makes, calibres and designs of guns intensifies the fetishistic emotion with which they are regarded. Their handling becomes personalized, instinctive and supremely efficient: guns partake of the sex-magic which enshrouds the whole book in its empyreumatic smoke. Equally relentless is the stress on smell: Kim, like other boys of his kind, gives off a "rank rutish smell" when aroused. His *smell brain* revels in the stink of the corruption which is the book's consistent practice. Early on we hear of a Parisian bartender who fashions a weapon from his breath, the smell of which induces "vertiginous retching horror". Later we learn of ambiguous odours, at first suavevolent, then sickening, "the sweet rotten after smell of gangrene", "the pucker of ozone from desert boy's genitals"; at a market Kim acquires "small weapons . . . gardenia and carrion . . . roses and baby shit". Such olfactory nasties are outdone by the genetic mutations of Venus, where men turn into centipedes, and the land is rutted by shrunken, violent and repellant hogs which excrete through their skin. Here Kim cooks recipes from *La Cuisine de Peste* - "possum succumbed to climatic buoies . . . candied suckling armadillos cooked in their own leprosy" - the esurient fantasies of Epicure Mammon

aggrandizing catalogue of interchangeable sexual encounters. Small wonder that Bukowski's last novel, *Ham on Rye*, cast back to a largely untold source: his childhood and youth.

*Hot Water Music*, Bukowski's first collection of stories for over ten years, evinces a similar circumspection only in "Some Mother", an un-inspired tale of adolescent curiosity concerning the mysteries of the female body. Bukowski/Chinaski appears in less than half of these thirty-six stories. A number of others, though, are Chinaski vehicles to all but the protagonists' names. The collection mainly comprises further reworkings of Bukowski's older material and further reminders that the newer is, by comparison, infertile stuff. Even allowing for a sense of *déjà vu*, what is immediately apparent about the former is their tiredness. Two stories, for instance, deal with incidents following the funeral of Bukowski's father: events which, in several poems, he has used to good effect. Here, though, they receive perfunctory treatment. Similarly ill-handled are "It's a Dirty World", "Beer at the Corner Bar", and "Home Run", where familiar scenes on the wild side are depicted with little of Bukowski's once-customary verve. "Fooling Marie" shows something like his old spirit, but its content - a gambler is robbed in a motel room by a woman who has picked him up at the racetrack - comes right from the bottom of the barrel. The stories based on Bukowski's more recent experiences frequently resemble postscripts to

given a further obscene twist. At one point, Burroughs picks up on a plague described in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, and he clearly identifies with Nashe as a journalist of atrocity like all his books *The Place of Dead Roads* is stuffed with cruelly relished as spectacle. And in such passages his writing displays a Rabelaisian inventiveness and humour, a hallucinogenic vividness.

None the less it is not getting anywhere; it exemplifies inertia, in both senses of the word - it is static, and it goes on and on unstopably. In particular it does not get into our sympathy. The most exquisite scene in the book describes Kim's sex with an incubus, and it is a fitting emblem of Burroughs's deliberate and satirical repudiation of human normality, contact and aspiration. Writing, Kim realizes, is more efficient than mummification as a means to immortality; and the novel is thronged with literary echoes, lines of verse, immortal axioms on immortality. But Burroughs does not reach out to mortals; negative in everything else, he has no negative capability. His imaginative journeys really are made down dead roads, itineraries within the arid kingdom of his mind; Kim's murderous, fantastical progress is a parable of Burroughs's own subversive career. It is Burroughs's awareness of this that gives the novel, for all its self-indulgence and its chaotic vehemence, a valedictory mood.

*Women*. "Not Quite Bernadette", though, is an entertaining shaggy dog story, while "Scum Grief" also amuses: Chinaski, accompanied by his girlfriend, attends a poetry reading; while the poet declaims - "Choke, Columbus, and the dead horses of / my soul, / greet me at the gates / greet me sleeping. Historians / see this tenderest / Paat / leapt over with / galsha dreams, drilled dead with / importunity!" - Chinaski provides a whispered translation (" . . . Basically what he's saying is, that he can't sleep, nights . . .").

The non-autobiographical stories - or, at least, those not obviously autobiographical - tend towards fatal inconsequence. In "Less Delicate than the Locust", for example, two painters and their girlfriends visit an expensive restaurant; they get drunk, create a disturbance, and leave without paying the bill. The End. The principal exceptions are "Turkous Morning", a brief episode from a lousy marriage, and, in particular, "Broken Merchandise", which concerns a middle-aged nobody with a nagging boss at work and a nagging wife at home, who vents his frustrations on two young troublemakers who cut him up on the freeway. Though by no means one of Bukowski's very best, it is the kind of story with which he has always compensated for his regular misfires. In *Hot Water Music*, though, the misfires occur far too often even by his erratic standards, the compensations too rarely and too meagrely.

to write a major novel, if *Angels* can be taken as a guide. In this book there is the metaphysical alibi, the eye for terrible detail, the grasp of character. But he got his venues wrong. His Phoenix is hollow and strained; Bill Houston's God-ridden mother and brothers tip the whole horrible narrative into hyperbole, at just the point where we need to believe every word. All the same, we believe enough of *Angels* to recognize a new voice.

Oxford University Press has recently published a paperback edition of *The Modern American Novel* by Malcolm Bradbury (209pp. £3.95, 0 19 289044 1), which was first published in 1983. The book covers American fiction from the 1890s to the 1970s. It is a divided, into seven chapters: "Naturalism and Impressionism: The 1890s"; "Modernism and Modernism: 1900-1912"; "Art-Style and Life-Style: The 1920s"; "Realism and Surrealism: The 1930s"; "Liberalism and Existentialism: The 1940s and 1950s"; "Postmodernism and Others: The 1960s and 1970s"; "The American Novel Since 1980". It is a major work, a Select Bibliography and

## The bond of words

Anthony Burgess

GEOFFREY HILL  
The Lords of Limit: Essays on Literature and Ideas  
197pp. André Deutsch. £12.95.  
0233 97581 0

Geoffrey Hill is a poet before he is an academic. Five volumes of verse and a translation of Ibsen's *Brand* come before this, his first collection of criticism. Delivering his inaugural lecture as Professor of English Literature at the University of Leeds in 1977, Hill is properly modest about his poetic achievement - "That I have had some practice in the making of verse is evidence to be noted, I think; if only as a glint of improper goliardic song to the margin of a proper gospel" - but the whole discourse, entitled "Poetry as 'Menace' and 'Atonement'", despite its concentration on the work of others, is grounded in the triumphs and doubts of his own practice. One has the impression of so powerful a desire for self-effacement, as a poet if not, which would be unseemly, as one who professes poetry, that a perhaps excessive multiplicity of citation and allusion serves as a sequined motley which, seeming to hide his nakedness, exposes it all the more.

"Atonement" is used in its radical sense of "at-one-ment, a setting at one, a bringing into concord, a reconciling, a uniting in harmony". T. S. Eliot speaks Hill's own devotional language when, describing the alation of having achieved that arrangement of words which, below right, seems ordained and inevitable, he speaks of a sense of "exhaustion, of appeasement, of absolutio, end of something very near nihilism". The humility, then, of one who has attained the vision. Wherein lies the "meoace" of Hill's title? If I read him right, it is in the pride of rhetorical achievement, of verbal mastery, that opposes self-surrender. When Yeats, in "The Circus Animals' Desertion", submits to lying down "in the foul rag-and-boose shop of the heart", the language he uses denies the theme. "How is it possible . . . to revoke 'masterful images' in images that are themselves masterful?"

The poet, and the imaginative writer in general, rest in a state of dilemma which may be morally glossed as hypocrisy. There is empirical as well as theological guilt. One makes errors and one sins, but while sins may be forgiven, as Chesterton says, there is no forgiveness for a *faux pas*. Or, to put it in the weightier words of Helen Weddell's Gilles de Vannes, "There is no canonical repentance for a mistake". Hill's theological stance is firm enough for him to see the comparative absurdity of the knifing editor's guilt at publishing an error which ensures that "there are jerseys all over England with one arm longer than the other", but he does not condemn Simcoe Well as an obsessive neurotic for proposing penal servitude for sinners against accuracy in printed texts or radio broadcasts. Grammar itself is a "social and public institution", so to offend against it may be regarded as a criminal act. Sin, however, is a different matter. Or is it?

The poet's responsibility to agonize over his statements (with, one might think, a scrupulously that kills creative joy) exists on both a theological and a social level; but properly these should coincide. In law, morality is based on expediency only when society is debased or, in an emergency like war, is compelled to blur its sense of moral absolutes. No society can be wholly secular. In an essay entitled "The Absolute Reasonableness of Robert Southwell", Hill takes an English Catholic poet best known, though very inadequately known, for "The Burning Babe", a poem which looks to many secular readers like mawkish devotionism but must be seen in a wider and more poignant context than the *Oxford Book of English Verse* can provide. Southwell was a flâneur of Elizabethan recusancy, whose writings show skill in polemic and also innocence, that "choosing not to say", interpreted by his tormentors as an unbecoming dumbness. Topcliffe, the master inquisitor, called him a "monster" of "strange taciturnity" and Robert Cecil, seeing Southwell subjected to a "new kind of torture", remarked that he remained "as dumb as a tree stump; and it had not been possible to make him utter one word". Here was the victim's scrupulosity.

But one word that Southwell did utter was "equilite", a word describing a principle of justice based on something larger than expediency. Southwell found that Topcliffe was "not open to reason", meaning that he had forfeited a traditional principle of law for the new, hypocritical and destructive device of "reason of state". No man submits to martyrdom lightly. If, like Southwell or Campion, he has the duty to state his position in words, he must think about those words carefully and even decide when silence is a word. Thinking of words in prospect of a shameful and agonizing death means seeing them less as the counters of the market-place than as ambiguous complexities, the material of the poet. "Atonement" and "menace" now relate to more terrible im-mediates than those of a professional address. The "reasonableness" of Southwell encompasses both religious discipline and what Fr Devin terms "an element of supernatural wildness". Hill finds in Southwell a "complex simplicity" appropriate equally to the poet and the martyr.

It is perhaps in order to see in another poet, one who considered himself to be martyred by "reasons of state", a failure of scrupulosity unforgivable in one committed to getting words right. Ezra Pound was an important poet but not a satisfactory one. The strength of his work lies in a brilliance of rhetoric which is often set parallel to meaning. We can read the *Centos* with excitement, but we take the obsession with *Usura* as a discarding eccentricity. Unfortunately, history forces us to take it as something else, for the obsession got out of literature into the real world of political reality and war. "The crime with which he is charged", said one of the experts at the Washington hearing, "is closely tied up with his profession of writing." Literature, in an age which has lost its sense of "absolute reasonableness", is no longer appropriate to sanity or right action. "Our word is our bond", Hill says, not only in the title of his essay, and Pound ought not to have misconstrued "a fine point of semantics". Shelley did a lot of harm with his boast about poets being unacknowledged legislators. What poets can do is to judge after the act. Pound was perhaps right to denounce *Usura* as a historical wrong, but he believed that poets' "judicial sentences" could have a legislative or executive validity. "The world's revenge", during his court hearing and its aftermath, was unwillingly to pay him back, confusion for confusion, with legislative or executive acts presuming to be true verdicts.



Morni concern illuminates Hill's discussions of Jonson's *Sejanus*, Swift's poetry of "reaction", *Cymbeline*, and the dangerously perplexed world of T. H. Green. He is perhaps at his best in an essay called "Redeeming the Time", in which, after respectfully differing from Iris Murdoch on the statement, in her essay on Sartre, that the disruptive forces of the nineteenth century were "dispossessed and

weak . . . incoherent, disunited, and speechless", he seeks to demonstrate how the very rhythms of Victorian poetry and prose, to say nothing of public rhetoric, illustrate doubt and breakdown. Hopkins's ear he takes to be the organ best attuned to this sense of dissolution in that time. "Decomposition" is set against "composition", and in no Glibertian pun. If "Harry Ploughman" combines "work-song, shanty and liturgical chant - the organic rhythms - "Tom's Garland" is crabbed, harsh and near-incoherent in mimesis of its subject, the Victorian unemployed. "Tom's Garland", thinks Hill, is a failure, "but it fails to some purpose; it is a test to breaking point of the sustaining power of language." Hopkins considered the poem to be too highly wrought, over-composed rather than a model of decomposition: I would say that its skill lies in its appearance of failure. But Hill is not often wrong about Hopkins.

The age, says Hill, was decadent, and critics of Hopkins have heard in him the voice of that decadence, particularly Donald Davie: "He cultivates his hysteria and pushes his sickness to the limit." For hysteria read passion and ecstasy; for sickness the dark night of the soul. Such terms have become sectarian. All of Hill's essays imply, if they do not directly state, a useless regret at the fissure that was opening in British life and letters when Southwell saw the burning babe from the scaffold. His perceptions are exquisite and his reading is wide. "O Lords of Limit, trailing dark and light . . .": the epigraph is from Auden. A more pertinent one is from J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*: "And for this reason we call the doctrine of the things that can be and go wrong on the occasion of such utterances, the doctrine of the *infelicities*." Hill is good on the infelicities.

## Adventures among master-theories

David Lodge

EDWARD W. SAID  
The World, the Text, and the Critic  
327pp. Faber. £15 (paperback, £6.95).  
0571 13264 2

This collection of Edward Said's occasional papers and articles, composed over the past twelve years, includes essays on Swift and Conrad, and on some key figures in this early history of European Orientalism, such as Renan, Massignon and Raymond Schwab; but its emphasis is overwhelmingly on modern literary theory. To be more precise, Professor Said is concerned, not to say obsessed, with the relations between that new kind of intellectual discourse often referred to simply as "theory" - a mixture of philosophy, semiotics and psychoanalysis, of mainly European provenance - with, on the one hand, the institution of literary studies, and on the other with social and political life at large. These essays chart a process of discovery and disillusionment. The new theory that Said hoped would liberate academic critics from their ivory towers has merely led them into a wilderness, or possibly a lotus-land; of epistemological scepticism and political apathy. That, at least, is what I take to be the message of the book, though it takes some time to extricate it, so dense is the texture of Said's prose, and so elaborately qualified his arguments.

Said is Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia. His disciplinary base was English (his first book was a rather turgid phenomenological study of Conrad) but he is evidently fully at home in French and familiar with several other languages. He is, indeed, a formidable intelligent and well-read man. When the Continental structuralist revolution hit the American academic world (the 1965 Conference at Johns Hopkins on the Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man being, as Said notes, the seminal moment) he was one of the first of the younger American critics to sense its importance.

Throughout the late 1960s and the 70s he kept up with developments in structuralism and poststructuralism, and contributed several useful expositions of the new ideas (some collected in his volume *Beginnings*, and some in this book), but always there was a note of

reservation, of mistrust, about the increasing hermeneutism of the new theory, especially the thought of Derrida as it was domesticated and developed by the influential Yale School of de Man, Hartman, Miller and Bloom.

The registration of these reservations coincided with Said's explicit self-identification with the cause of the Palestinians (he is himself Palestinian in origin) and his composition of a polemical work on Orientalism. I confess I have not read that book, but it is fairly easy to infer its argument from discussion of the topic in various parts of *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Said acknowledges his debt, to writing *Orientalism*, to the work of Michel Foucault, to which many other critics of a politically Left persuasion, especially in Britain, have also looked as a way out of the Derridean *abîme* that does not simply lead back to liberal humanism and traditional literary scholarship.

Foucault's concept of all discourse as a field of contest for power has obvious attractions for critics who feel that criticism should have something instrumentally relevant to say about such matters as imperialism and the class-struggle. But the very inclusiveness of Foucault's theory makes it hardly more promising as a basis for action than Derrida's critique of logocentrism. If there is nothing but the struggle for power, then there is no ground on which to persuade people that they should give up some of their power for the greater good. Foucault, Said concludes regretfully, after an expert and to many ways sympathetic exposition of the French philosopher's ideas, takes a curiously passive and sterile view not so much of the use of power, but of how and why power is gained, used and held on to. . . . What one misses in Foucault is something resembling Gramsci's analysis of hegemony, historical blocks, ensembles of relationship done from the perspective of an engaged political worker for whom the fascinated description of exercised power is never a substitute for trying to change power relationships within society.

Derrida (or Barthes or Lacan) - Foucault - Gramsci: it is a familiar paradigm of the radical literary intellectual's quest in the past decade, but it is a route that leads further and further away from literature and literary studies as cultural institutions, and may actually demand their extinction (see, for example, the conclusion of Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory*). Said, however, is still personally, and, one might almost say, emotionally attached to the

academy. His style is grave, scholarly and sometimes pedantic. He manifests a deep admiration for great humanist scholars like Auerbach and Spitzer, and is complimentary to critics such as the late Paul de Man and Stanley Fish, with whose positions he must, to be consistent, fundamentally disagree. (Fish, for instance, to whom Said pays handsome tribute in his acknowledgments, is the most eloquent spokesman for that "ethic of professionalism" whose effect on literary criticism Said deplores in his Introduction.)

There must, however, be some doubt about the consistency of Said's thinking, a doubt he appears to share. In that same introduction we find the following interesting admission:

It is an undoubted exaggeration . . . to say that these essays make absolutely clear what my critical posture - only implied by *Orientalism* and my other recent books - really is. To some this may seem like a falling of rigor, honesty or energy. To others it may imply some radical uncertainty on my part as to what I do stand for, especially given the fact that I have been accused by colleagues of an intemperance and even unseemly polemicism. To still others - and this concerns me more - it may seem that I am an undeclared Marxist, afraid of losing respectability and concerned by the contradictions entailed by the label "Marxist". Without wishing to answer all the questions raised by these matters, I would like my views to be as clear as possible.

It is strange that Said should raise these very pointed questions so frankly and in the same breath decline to answer them fully. He does, to be fair, go on to offer a partial answer, but Said's "as clear as possible" is not everyone's idea of clarity. He declares himself to be in favour of "oppositional" criticism. "If criticism is reducible neither to a doctrine nor to a political position on a particular question, and if it is to be in the world and self-aware simultaneously, then its identity is its difference from other cultural activities." An admirable sentiment, but one that leaves us little the wiser as to where Said really stands amid all the bewildering and often mutually incompatible theories he exhibits in this book.

The reader who approaches *The World, the Text and the Critic* hoping to be given an unambiguous prescription for the proper relationship between these three terms is likely to be frustrated and, ultimately, bored. The real interest of the book is the intellectual autobiography implied in the adventures of a soul among master-theories.

John Coates



# Constrained coercion

Stanislav Andreski

GEORGE SANFORD  
Polish Communism in Crisis  
249pp. Croom Helm. £14.95.  
07099 23589  
LEOPOLD LABEDZ (Editor)  
Poland Under Jaruzelski, Parts I and II  
213pp. and 204pp. Survey, Volume 26, Nos 3  
and 4, 133 Oxford St, London W1. £5 each.  
ISSN 0039 6192  
TIMOTHY GARTON ASH  
The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980-82  
386pp. Jonathan Cape. £12.50.  
0224 020420

The events in Poland of recent years have not borne out Orwell's fears: despite thirty-eight years of indoctrination nobody loves Big Brother. The young hate the government and, while there are enough obedient servants to hold the nation down, no genuinely committed Marxists can be found, even at the top. Their quarrels and manoeuvrings are described in great detail in George Sanford's *Polish Communism in Crisis*, but despite the accuracy of his narrative he makes the error of seeing these as rooted in doctrinal schisma. He throws away the key to an explanation when he says, "Western analysts generally underestimate the extent to which the Communists sincerely believe in their ideas and principles." This may well be true in some cases, but the attitude of the great majority of Poland's Communists is surely one of cynical lip-service rather than of sincere belief.

Members of the pre-war Communist Party—the subject of one of the most informative items in the important collection of materials published in *Survey* Volume 26, Nos 3 and 4—not only risked long terms of imprisonment for their commitment but were willing to make the dangerous journey to Moscow even if it meant being reprimanded when they got there. But as soon as the Party was put into power by force of Soviet arms, the few thousand old believers and young converts were swamped by more than two million opportunists and semi-conscripts. By 1980 the believers had either lost their faith, died or been exiled. The astonishing events of 1980 and 1981 can be understood only if we realize that all the faith and dedication were on the side of Solidarity. According to a poll quoted by Sanford (conducted, of course, during the period of freedom) only 3 per cent would have voted for the Party in free elections. In another poll only 1.2 per cent condemned Solidarity. Since the three million Party members amount to about 12 per cent of the adult population, this means that only one in four of them would have voted for his party, and only one in ten was decidedly against Solidarity. In a third poll only 4 per cent chose someone other than Walesa or the Pope as the fellow-countryman they most admired, which means that at least two out of three Party members chose one of them. Sanford does not mention the even more revealing fact that more than a third of Party members joined Solidarity.

Absence of conviction explains the corruption of the Gierek period. To combination with the workings of ordinary human decency it also explains its relative liberalism. From the beginning the system combined poor economic performance with wild promises and blatant lies about achievements. Small wonder, therefore, that whenever they dared the workers protested or rioted: and that only by crushing them could the system be preserved. The more deceit among the apparatchiks, however, disapproved of the bloodshed, while others were a bit afraid of the workers. So after the repression in 1970-71 they got rid of Gomulka, whom they blamed for the predicament, and chose a wizard who offered a formula for avoiding mass shootings.

Gierek's plan was to borrow from the West to build up industry, whose exports would repay the loans and leave something over for raising the standard of living. Even without the repression in the West the plan was doomed: an industry nullified by red tape and political favouritism could never compete in world markets. On top of this, the borrowed money was mostly misallocated or wasted on consumer goods. This is attested by the confidential Kunkin report (reproduced in *Survey*) which

cost its chief author his place in the Politburo, and is interesting testimony that some of the more conscientious people at the top were capable of repentance.

Workers in Poland suffered no worse treatment than their counterparts in other "people's democracies", but they were less easily intimidated because of the national tradition of resistance and the relative mildness of Gierek's policies, and particularly as the younger generation had not been exposed to the worst of Stalinism. The impressive strength and unity of Solidarity stemmed from the universally shared aim: to put an end to Communist bullying and exploitation. Had the movement won freedom, it would inevitably have split into factions, because agreement was lacking on plans for reform, and the ideas of most supporters were hazy, inconsistent and naive. It would be unjust, however, to blame the leaders for being impractical, because there was nothing to be practical about: their efforts were doomed from the start. All attempts to reform the system were blocked by the hard-liners in the bureaucracy, encouraged by Moscow. Solidarity's followers would have disowned their leaders as traitors if they had been told to obey the old management. There was no answer to the argument that "those who got us into this mess will not get us out". The workers wanted some improvement in their condition, but wage increases only made the queues longer. The unrest aggravated the distress which caused it. A command economy can only function if the planners are obeyed: overburdened by bureaucratic parasitism, strangled by red tape, dislocated by foolish planning and incompetent management, the ramshackle machine was being brought to a complete standstill by the workers' defiance. The resulting despair made repression easier.

The outcome would have been no better if the Party had followed Kubiak's advice, that is, made some concessions to popular demands and introduced a limited democracy, because this would have neither satisfied the nation nor been acceptable to Moscow. Was the Solidarity episode a "lunacy", then, as Sanford puts it? This is not the view of Timothy Garton Ash, who in his perceptive article in *Survey* as well as in his book *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980-82* rightly stresses the great moral achievement of Solidarity as a mass demonstration of uprightness. The young people who have tasted freedom—freedom not only to speak out but also to gather together freely, to travel abroad and to form associations and clubs (of which hundreds, if not thousands, sprang up)—will never forget the experience. They can be coerced, but their struggle has given them a powerful immunizing "booster" against the debilitating idea that might is right.

The divisions in the Party during the Solidarity period (well described by Sanford) derived from differences in outlook and temperament as much as from a conflict of interests. Under the influence of the general mood of patriotic elation some members dropped their habitual prudence while others did not. Those with a *mafioso* mentality wanted to defend their posi-

tions by Stalin's well-proven remedy, that is, the use of force, while the decent men were searching frantically for a solution which would avoid fratricidal bloodshed as well as a Soviet invasion. After the deposition of Gierek there was no undisputed leader, and the squabbles between cliques came into the open. The party machine began to shake apart. Two pillars remained solid: the army and the police, where the habits of obedience persisted. Indoctrination failed, but the drill continued to work.

In his *Survey* article Michael Sadykiewicz points to a feature which is essential to an understanding of the role of the army: the very high ratio of professionals to conscripts, which was 1:6 in the pre-war army, and now is 1:1. The navy and air force are three-quarters professional. The Units for Internal Defence account for 65,000 out of the army's 350,000. The various kinds of police add up to 250,000 of whom 25,000 are not police. The cost of all this must weigh down the economy, as the 450,000 professionals are well paid (and have access to special shops and other perks).

In his introduction to this issue of *Survey*, Leszek Kolakowski exposes the hollowness of the claim that the repression saved the country from chaos. No doubt there would have been a good deal of disorder if the system had been abolished. A collapse of the command economy would have aggravated the distress until the market and private and cooperative enterprise began to work properly. But the long-term prospects would surely have been much brighter than they are now. This, however, was not where the generals' dilemma lay. As Sadykiewicz makes clear, they had three choices: (1) to do what they have in fact done; (2) to stand by and let Soviet troops do the job; (3) to defend the nation and perish, together with a large number of their countrymen, in a hopeless battle.

The second choice would have cost them their jobs, while many civilians would have died. To judge by what happened in Hungary in 1956, tens if not hundreds of thousands would have been deported to Siberia. Jaruzelski's action, in contrast, was remarkably unbloody in comparison with what happened in Odansk in 1970, or in Poznan in 1956, when repression was on a much smaller scale. It is difficult to judge the generals' motives because the first choice has not only served their own interests but also saved many of their compatriots from a much worse fate. Given that the Poles would not voluntarily accept a Communist government, while Moscow would allow no other, the only question was who would do the coercing and how. To condemn Jaruzelski without reservation one must make the far-fetched supposition that Moscow would have allowed Poland to become independent.

It is absurd that the police should hit peaceful demonstrators or strikers, and imprison people for distributing leaflets or organizing a meeting, but this is preferable to the old methods of shooting or working them to death in gulags. The introduction of rubber truncheons, tear-gas and water-cannon marks an important step in the civilizing process: it is the

first time these weapons have been used in a Communist state. (They had to be imported from Japan.)

Apart from other evidence, the materials published in *Survey* show that up till now the repression, though repellent by liberal standards, has been mild in comparison with normal Communist practice. Like Mussolini's prisoner Granisci and the Tsar's prisoner Lenin, Kuron is able to write and to smuggle out his writings: in publishing his article the editor of *Survey* has assumed that he will not cause thereby the author's death or torture, as would have happened in Stalin's days. The article in *Survey* on the universities under martial law, by Michal Kolodziej, gives many examples of coercion and rough handling, but so far there has been no massive purge, as in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Jan Jozef Lipski's splendid article, "The founding of KOR", provides another example of his courage and integrity. The fact that he is out of gaol shows that the repression is milder than in other "people's democracies".

None the less it still takes great courage and fortitude to go on resisting. Though obliged to hide from his persecutors, Solidarity's leader Bujak calls for the avoidance of futile violence and advises his followers to concentrate on moral resistance and mutual aid. Servility encourages bullying. So it is good that—as the materials in *Survey* show—there are no signs of a collapse of the spirit of independence. The moral pressure of the nation does seem to have some restraining influence on the mercenaries, especially of the lower rank.

The final verdict on Jaruzelski's government will depend on the use it makes of its ill-gotten power. The naked nature of the coercion has permitted a franker discussion of the regime's shortcomings than was possible even under the otherwise more liberal Gierek, as well as the raising of prices and the introduction of ration cards. Coercion enables the command economy to function but only at a very low level of efficiency.

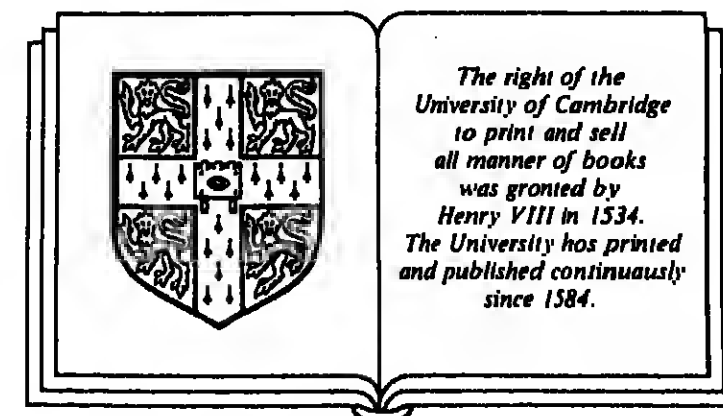
Given the refractoriness of the work-force, no improvement will be possible without economic liberalization and the introduction of market mechanisms. This would be a rational policy for the regime, if only out of self-interest, because if people could improve their condition in small ways by their own efforts they might be less interested in opposing the government. The obstacles to reforms in this direction stem not from doctrine (which nobody in Poland takes seriously) but from the vested interests of the bureaucratic mass and the affinity between military mentality and the command economy. Moreover, faced with the unanimous hostility of the governed, the rulers are in no position to displace Moscow, particularly as their inability to pay the country's debts to the West has made it more economically dependent on the Soviet Union. Economic and cultural liberalization (for which Moscow's permission might conceivably be obtained if it were presented as analogous to Lenin's New Economic Programme) would not endanger the political monopoly of the Party, which is protected by 450,000 well-armed regulars. But there can be no end of dictatorship in Poland without a fundamental change in the USSR.

A full and well-rounded picture of the brief episode of civil liberties under Communism can be found in *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980-82*, a masterpiece of contemporary history by Timothy Garton Ash which is based on a thorough knowledge of the language, the country and its history. Combining remarkable literary and analytical skills, he deftly blends narrative with comment, vivid drawing of scenes (always well chosen to illustrate a general point) with figures, and glances into the background history needed for understanding the recent events. True, he has a more rewarding subject than George Sanford, as it is easier to write a gripping story about the misadventures of "blue-collar" knights-errant, who rushed into a battle for freedom which they were bound to lose, than about the tedious parleys of sour apparatchiks.

The outcome of Poland's recent struggle is a curious duality of power: Jaruzelski's government has almost complete control over the people's bodies, while the ghost of Solidarity continues to rule their minds.

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# From the functional to the international

Charles Fox

**MARTIN WILLIAMS**  
The Jazz Tradition  
New and Revised Edition  
287pp. Oxford University Press. £14.50  
(paperback, Galaxy Books, £4.95).  
019 503290 X

**WHITNEY BALLIETT**  
Jelly Roll, Jabba and Fats: 19 Portraits in Jazz  
197pp. Oxford University Press. £9.95.  
019 503275 6

Jazz, just like film, with which it is exactly contemporary, began by not really being considered as art at all; just as a part of our century's social flotsam. It's true that Ernest Ansermet, as early as 1919, reviewed a concert in Paris by the Southern Synchopated Orchestra and was startlingly prophetic about that band's clarinetist: "I wish to set down the name of this artist of genius... it is Sidney Bechet". But in Bechet's home town there was little attempt in respectable circles to take the music seriously. "Why is the jazz music, and therefore the jazz band?" enquired the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* in 1918. "As well ask why is the dime novel or the grease-dripping doughnut. All are manifestations of a low streak in man's natures that has not yet come out in civilization's wash." Musicologists might have nattered spirituals and other songs of the black slaves. They would have nothing to do with the antics going on in the dance-halls and along the streets. The British critic, Iain Lang, writing during the Second World War, suggested that this might not be a purely American prejudice: "Would you expect *The Times* to be sympathetic to an art-form created independent of bourgeois values in Shadwell, Shoreditch, Soho and Saffron Hill?"

What seemed lowly in the United States, however, soon struck Europeans — well, European intellectuals to be precise — as being exotic. Which is why the first books of jazz criticism appeared on this side of the Atlantic. A Belgian lawyer, Robert Goffin, sneaked in earliest with *Asix Frontières du Jazz* (1932). Much more influential was *Le Jazz Hot* (1934) by a twenty-two-year-old Frenchman, Hugues Panassé. Eddie Condon made a quip about Panassé that has been much quoted: "I wouldn't think of going to France and telling him how to jump on a grape". Nevertheless, *Hot Jazz: The guide to swing music*, as the book was called after being translated into English in 1936, offered an aesthetic for a music that had rarely been analysed or had its workings explained before. Panassé outlined how instrumental timbres derived from the human voice, how big bands could accommodate improvisation, why some soloists were better than others. For those last judgments he relied upon what records he could get hold of and the acuteness of his ears, to which was added the advice of American musicians who dropped into Paris between the wars.

Where he was to stumble was in not accepting that the music simply had to change. The arrival of bebop halfway through the 1940s tangled his responses; not, like Philip Larkin, because of a distaste for Modernism ("Pound, Picasso and Parker") in general but because he imagined that elements he saw as integral to jazz — vocalized tone and rhythmic continuity, just to seize upon two — were missing from the new music. All this was to be refuted later with much intellectual vigour — and a much closer analysis of the music — by a younger French critic, André Hodeir, whose *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence* (1956) diagnosed such tricky subjects as why "playing hot" was not the same as swinging and probed not only the styles of a few key musicians (Dixie Wells was one to whom justice was done), yet glimpsed in Johnny Dods little more than a bungling interloper. But critics outside America did not always appreciate the way in which blues could penetrate jazz, or the simple historical and economic reasons for jazz expressing — sometimes simultaneously — the differing values of folk music, show business and art.

Not until just before the Second World War had there been much inclination to delve into the music's history. Suddenly, however, events of several more than a quarter of a century earlier began to be seen in the light of the

falling away. That romantic vision reached its apogee in Rudi Blesh's *Shining Trumpets* (1946), condemning the way New Orleans music had been sullied, then destroyed, by commercial pressures. A shrewd analysis followed almost immediately. What made Sidney Finkelstein's *Jazz: A People's Music* (1948) the first really grown-up book about jazz was its perception of continuity, its relating of present to past, of the *recherché* to the unabashedly populist. Finkelstein's viewpoint was Marxist but his thinking remained undogmatic, aware that music has its own kind of logic. He does not, as Blesh did, see Count Basie's entry on the scene as illustrating the triviality of riffs, but rather as affirming the vitality of the twelve-bar blues. Confronted by a Charlie Parker only a year or two away from Minton's and Clark Monroe's Uptown House, Finkelstein responded by recognizing Parker's mastery of blues and how that linked him — and, just to show that pigmentation did not enter into it, the white clarinetist Frank Teschemacher too — with Bessie Smith and King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band.

The 1950s saw the arrival of more jazz critics who could take that wider view; not only the volatile André Hodeir, but, in America, the group of writers, including Martin Williams, who contributed to the short-lived magazine *Jazz Review* and Whitney Balliett, who had begun reviewing for the *New Yorker*. Black Americans, paradoxically, were still lagging when it came to writing about jazz as distinct from playing it. *Bessie People* (1963) by LeRoi Jones (who later took the name of Amiri Baraka) was the first substantial attempt by a black writer at aligning Afro-American music with the history and life-style of the Negro in the United States. This move to identify jazz as black music was to be taken further — often by white writers — during the next couple of decades.

Seeing jazz as a whole prompted Martin Williams, at any rate, to search for factors that remain constant yet different throughout its history. In the original edition of *The Jazz Tradition* (1970) Williams took for his underlying thesis the notion that all innovation in jazz has been rhythmic. By which he did not mean metrical, the toying with time-signatures that Dave Brubeck, for example, used to go in for, but the placing of notes in relation to the bar or the beat or the phrase, the ratio between

## Simplicity and virtuosity

John Wain

**JAMES LINCOLN COLLIER**  
Louis Armstrong  
383pp. Michael Joseph. £12.95.  
0718124310

Once one has thrown away the hideously vulgar dust-jacket this book is well worth having. It offers a view of Armstrong's life and music not substantially different from that already set out in the excellent chapter on him in James Lincoln Collier's *The Making of Jazz* (1978), but it rounds out that view with very substantial information, both about the man and about the various backgrounds against which he took up his position.

One of the possible ways in which Armstrong's musical career can be grasped is in terms of packaging. He was almost entirely stage-managed and promoted by other people (for the last thirty years of his life by one man, Joe Glaser), and the way he was presented, what kind of audience was being wooed and in what terms, mark the main stages of his life. At the beginning, everything was uncomplicated. Jazz was a natural music in New Orleans, blending easily with the tradition of the black entertainer who joked, capered and told funny stories. The music was largely improvised, which meant that it was played by small groups. At the end of the 1920s small-band jazz went into prolonged hibernation. To survive you had to have a large, well-drilled band that could take bookings at the big ballrooms. Armstrong fronted a number of these, with boring results. His role was in the six or eight-piece bands of the 1930s and 1940s, and the use of the

foreground and background. Williams was (and is) bold enough to flout liberal taboos and suggest that blacks really do have a superior sense of rhythm. Williams has now added essays on King Oliver, Sidney Bechet, Art Tatum, Charles Mingus and Sarah Vaughan to his original selection. He has also expanded a few of the pieces. One interpolation points out the resemblance between a theme in Duke Ellington's "East St Louis Toodle-Oh" and one in what Williams calls Scott Joplin's "Heliotrope Bouquet". It was Louis Chauvin, however, who composed that rag's first two strains, the second of which appears to be the one Williams has in mind. (The point being made, though, becomes less tenable when it is realized that Chauvin's theme had already been borrowed by Boyd Atkins for "Heebie Jeebies", a tune which Louis Armstrong, among others, recorded only nine months before Ellington's first version of "East St Louis Toodle-Oh".)

Williams's plain manner gives his assertions almost a moral weight. Whitney Balliett, on the other hand, has absorbed the *New Yorker's* obliquity and concern with style. His critical values come across by implication a good deal of the time, even within the images that Balliett uses to describe a musician and his work. That is particularly so in the case of *Jelly Roll, Jabba and Fats*, "19 Portraits in Jazz" as the subtitle puts it and aiming very decidedly at portraiture rather than undiluted jazz criticism. Sometimes it is simply a matter of quoting what fellow musicians and acquaintances say. Dick Wellstood, for instance, saw Sidney Bechet as a disciplinarian ("It was like working for Bismarck") while Charles Delaunay felt he behaved like a peasant ("He would talk to anyone on the street"). Habits crop up constantly, especially tastes in food and drink. Writing about King Oliver, Balliett makes him sound like a character out of Mark Twain by quoting the drummer, Freddie Moore: "He didn't drink, but he'd sit down and eat a loaf of light bread and a whole fried chicken, and drink two quarts of milk and a pitcher of ice water with plenty of sugar in it". Teddy Wilson is described as approaching blues as if he were nibbling grapes. Using simile in that way, of course, is a part of Balliett's renowned facility at conveying a musician's sound and style. So when Vic Dickenson plays a melody straight, he "seems to be laughing up his sleeve". When

tured soloist and the "conductor" wagging a baton was not his. For fifteen years he went down in musical standing as he gained a foothold in show business — clowning in films, playing standard dance tunes, hamming on the radio with Bing Crosby. By the mid-1940s he had lost most of his magic and become an entertainer among entertainers: not having, like Fats Waller, the gift of diverting a wide audience and at the same time playing jazz at a level that made the clowning seem a trivial accompaniment.

The war years filled the pockets of anyone who could entertain the GIs at government expense, but when that prop was removed Armstrong was left in a weak position, half-forgotten by the jazz public and, in the entertainment field, no match for Gladye Rose Lee and Charlie McCarthy. It follows that the decision, whether taken by Armstrong or by someone else on his behalf, to reappear at the head of a traditional seven-piece New Orleans jazz band, the All Stars, was the crucial hinge of his life, giving him thirty years of fame and money at a time when he might easily have slid into complete neglect. Mr Collier is informative about this decision as he is about everything else. Being too conscientious a historian to simplify the story, he declines to pin-point one individual as the source of the idea, placing it instead against the background of a renewed interest in New Orleans jazz, a Dixieland revival nurtured largely by white musicians like Eddie Condon and Bobby Hackett, and, not least, the discovery by a large public, American and international, that Louis Armstrong embodied a legend, the jazz genius from the slums of black Storyville who had learnt to play the corner of the Colored Walk in Home and gone on to become the black Pied Piper who

the same trombonist hangs a beret over the bell of his horn, the result is "a soft, ruffling sound, a bird landing". The method can be self-indulgent but at its best Balliett can suggest the persona of a soloist, even — at second-hand, as it were — how good he is.

Williams and Balliett both write about Oliver and Bechet, about Lester Young and Ornette Coleman and Jelly Roll Morton. Typically enough, Williams spends nearly three pages breaking down exactly what happens in the Red Hot Peppers' recording of "Hyena Stomp". Balliett ends his piece by lamenting that the dying Morton was cooped up in a kind of broom closet in the hospital, and that no musicians from either the Duke Ellington or Jimmie Lunceford bands, both in Los Angeles at the time, bothered to attend his funeral. Both critics tackle, in their very different fashions, the beginnings of the laser sorts of jazz. Williams is not ashamed to admit being bored by John Coltrane's extended playing while accepting his importance. Balliett quotes — approvingly — praise of Ornette the musician, but also enlarges on his use of words ("R.P. Blackmur language"), in which straightforward English gets rearranged. Neither writer, however, sees jazz as existing in any significant sense outside the United States. Django Reinhardt gets mentioned when Balliett is interviewing Charles Delaunay. And although Williams pinpoints admirably John Lewis's place in the line of jazz composers, he ignores Lewis's prophecy that the next major jazz innovator could easily be European.

As it happens jazz has not developed lately in the way it used to. Those days are over when a single gigantic figure — Armstrong, Parker, Coltrane, always American, usually black — predicated the way that jazz musicians around the world would be playing. Once jazz ceased to be a major expression of black American society, once the music ceased being functional — either by opting to become art or by having rock take over its traditional duties, then autonomous happenings became inevitable. Both Williams and Balliett — and such a gifted heir-apparent as Gary Giddins — acknowledge the breadth of the music as it has existed for most of its history. It would be timely if they and others now recognized that the notion of jazz being an international music is no longer a pious fantasy, but one of the realities of the 1980s.

brought the world to Storyville.

The music he played in that last thirty-year stretch was inevitably disapproved of by jazz purists as adding nothing new to what he had achieved in the 1920s. And the new breed of black jazz musicians, militants to a man, disliked his clowning, his essentially welcoming and even ingratiating approach to his white audiences. But both objections are based on the notion that it is wrong simply to go back to one's roots. That belief, in the simple form in which Armstrong's detractors held it, would not be borne out by the history of any art.

The greatness of Louis Armstrong rested on two equal pillars. The first was his virtuosity. Whether or not the legendary New Orleans brass players of the days before sound-recording, such as Buddy Bolden, were virtuosos, Armstrong was certainly one, and the gramophone arrived at exactly the right moment to carry his achievements to an international audience and thus establish beyond doubt that jazz could produce a musician of world importance. This is the Armstrong who is represented on such recordings of the 1920s as "Squeaky Mo" and "West End Blues". The second foundation was complementary — the simplicity and economy which so often characterized his playing. Armstrong could take an ordinary commercial dance tune and play it with liberation so slight as to be hardly perceptible — lengthening this note a fraction of a second, shortening that, moving the tune flexibly back and forth in its relation to the beat. It seemed so simple, so much as if he were really doing nothing at all, and yet the result was to turn ordinary popular music into jazz. But to work that magic he needed a jazz framework, made up of half a dozen gifted musicians who shared his vision. How glad one is that, for whatever reason, he saw this himself before it was too late.

## Courts martial

Malcolm Vale

**GEORGES DUBY**  
The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The making of modern marriage in medieval France  
311pp. Allen Lane. £14.95.  
07139 1583 8

Georges Duby's *Le Chevalier, la femme et le prêtre* originally appeared in France in 1981, and has now been translated by Barbara Bray, to whom we owe the English version of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's *Montaillou*. The book is intended, writes Duby, for "all educated people who would like to understand how the structures and rites at present disintegrating before our eyes came into being". It therefore sheds light upon twentieth-century views of marriage and sexuality as well as upon the marital customs and practices of medieval France. A wider Anglo-American readership is now offered a most interesting survey of medieval marriage, in both theory and practice, centred upon the period of Gregorian reform and its aftermath in the later eleventh and twelfth centuries. There is much valuable explication of the available published sources in the book, where Duby's approach is that of the illuminating textual commentator. His best chapters tend to be those based upon material which he has made very much his own — above all, the genealogical and chronicle literature of Northern France. The sections relating to the lords of Amboise and the counts of Guines are particularly effective and the author makes considerable efforts to bring the Middle Ages to life for a contemporary audience throughout the book.

Despite these excellent qualities and laudable intentions, the book at times displays an almost Gibbonian lack of sympathy for many aspects of medieval social and religious life. Knightly society is represented as wedded to "brutishness and violence"; monasteries and nunneries are repositories for dispossessed younger children; courtly love is a hollow

sham, "fundamentally misogynous", treating women as mere objects and devised by the twelfth-century equivalents of male chauvinist pigs. The ever-menacing clergy lie in wait to "trap the laity in a net of consecrated marriage". Yet Duby's conclusion is that the strife of the later eleventh and early twelfth centuries over the marital behaviour of the laity ended in compromise and reconciliation. The reasons for this development are not made entirely clear. Profound but nebulous seismic changes in the social and economic structure of twelfth-century France are adduced to explain this shift in attitudes towards marriage. The causal connection is by no means established, and one wonders whether Duby's largely materialistic explanations of historical change are entirely valid in this area. He admits, furthermore, that "for the laity, marriage remained a secular matter" in the early thirteenth century, and the reader is left to question the extent to which the Church had ever succeeded in imposing rules and sanctions upon marital and sexual behaviour outside its own clerical ranks.

Throughout the Middle Ages marriage was, and continued to be, contracted and arranged with little or no reference to the fulfilment and pronouncements of celibate priests. The presence of a priest was not formally required at the espousal (*desponsatio*) of a couple until the Council of Trent (1563). Dispensations to marry within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity, and dissolutions of marriages (often on grounds of allegedly unsuspected consanguinity) were not difficult to obtain. Too many higher ecclesiastics were near kinsmen or servants of secular princes and nobles for there to be much sustained conflict over such issues either in the early or the later Middle Ages. Alternative explanations of the phenomena which Duby has drawn to the attention of a wider public than the world of professional historians cannot be ruled out.

Students of medieval literature, however, are less well served by the book than are social historians. Duby's account of the courtly and romance literature of the twelfth century contains some extraordinary assertions. "What the Virgin Mary was to Guibert de Nogent", he


writes, "the fairies [of romance] were to many frustrated knights" and "the people who laughed at these tales [the *fabliaux*] were on the side of the mystics". Such statements rest upon no supporting evidence, and the importance of women as an audience for — and as composers of — both romances and *fabliaux* is ignored. Similarly, Duby's concentration upon sources from the relatively restricted geographical area of North-West France neglects the Occitanian culture of this period. The circles around, for example, Ermengarde of Narbonne, Esclarmonde of Foix or Eleanor of Aquitaine are not examined; a rather different picture of marriage and the position of women might emerge from Southern French medieval Provençal sources.

The book also reflects a characteristic common to works of synthesis, aimed at a general audience by French historians. A tendency to utter what are in fact no more than metaphors or images as though they were confident conclusions, based upon concrete evidence, has regrettably overcome some recent French historical writing. Duby's concluding paragraphs, which attempt to set matrimonial practices into a more general context, illustrate this tendency: "the towns were awakening from their torpor, the roads were coming alive with traffic, the use of money was spreading, states were beginning to form. Everything became more mobile and flexible in the great upsurge of the twelfth century." Any undergraduate who wrote prose of this kind could expect short shrift from his tutor. Can these resounding historical clichés really have been written by the author of *La société aux XI<sup>e</sup> et XII<sup>e</sup> siècles dans la région narbonnaise* (1953), a work of the highest distinction by any standards? "The rule

ing class". Duby continues, "its power assured and suitably distributed, could afford to relax." But could Henry II and his sons, or Philip Augustus and his heirs, afford to relax? Perpetual vigilance, over matrimonial policy as over other political issues, was still crucial to the survival of ruling houses, as it was to be for the rest of the Middle Ages.

Duby is not always helped by his translator. Her style often tends to veer between the coy and the titillating. The reader is beckoned with the statement that "home life in a noble household was a hotbed of sexual adventure"; Guibert de Nogent's somewhat prolix Latin writings are described as "spicy"; and the daughters of medieval nobles, we are told, were cautioned against "games of slap and tickle". There are also some historical solecisms, such as the constant employment of "château" (with its Renaissance and later overtones for castle, or the references to the Investiture Conflict as the "War of the Investitures"). Readers of the English translation will also be surprised to encounter Ralph of Diss (Norfolk), Dean of St Paul's, in heavy disguise as the "English historian Raoul of Dicet".

The book ends by posing a question. Duby reminds us that, amid the sea of medieval male discourse, "we must not forget the women. Much has been said about them. But how much do we really know?" The answer seems to be that, thanks to the labours of feminist and other historians, including Duby himself, we already know a good deal. What we do not yet know enough about is the care, upbringing and function of children in medieval households. Perhaps Duby will in due course bring the perceptions and insights of his earlier work to bear on this important aspect of family history.



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# Cantabulations

Alan Bell

LAURENCE and HELEN FOWLER (Editors)  
Cambridge Commemorated: An anthology of  
university life  
384pp. Cambridge University Press. £12.95  
0521 257433

In *The Prelude* Wordsworth recalled of his  
Cambridge years that

Delighted through the motley spectacle:  
Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,  
Courts, cloisters; flocks of churches, gateways,  
towers.

Cambridge Commemorated, an agreeable gal-  
limatry, gives a verbal portrait of a similar  
motley of university life from the widest pos-  
sible range of sources of all periods. A few of the  
longer extracts are set pieces drawn from fic-  
tion — *The Longest Journey*, *A Room of One's  
Own* and *Porterhouse Blue* among them — but  
the greater part of the book is made up of fact  
amiably presented with an informal commen-  
tary.

The extracts form a loosely chronological  
patchwork, from early (and doubting) refer-  
ences to the legendary founder, Cantaber  
(357 ac), down to the installation of the Duke  
of Edinburgh as Chancellor in 1977. The  
approach is not directly historical, though there  
is a fair amount about the history of the  
University in the somewhat annalistic arrange-  
ment of the earlier period.

It is when Renaissance and Reformation  
breathe life into buildings and early statutes  
that the book takes off with the advent of Per-  
sonality; though deliberately avoiding the  
mere good story, there are anecdotes and  
"characters" aplenty, from the time of Eras-  
mus onwards. And because (as J.A.W. Ben-  
nett remarked in a passage included here)  
"academic histories, like academic memoirs,  
have the curious effect of distancing and  
embalming the conditions they describe",  
there is a strong sense of continuity throughout  
the book, even from early times.

Over so long a span it is interesting to pick  
out common themes, as if making a harmony of  
biblical passages. The parallels between the  
affray at Trinity gate in 1611 and the Garden  
House riot of 1970 are well brought out by a  
similar presentation of evidence. Less harmo-  
niously, one can balance various architectural  
sections. Fuller wrote on seventeenth-century  
improvements of "every college either casting  
its skin with the snake, or renewing its bill with  
the eagle, having their courts, or at least their  
fronts and gatehouses, repaired and adorned".  
That doughty controversialist Hugh Plummer  
uttered in 1978 a round commination of the  
"colossal guilt of all the Boards, Committees,  
Bursars, Benefactors and Building Tycoons,  
who found our paradise, and left it a nightmare  
— who expelled Nature with a fork and made  
sure that she could never return".

Not unexpectedly there are recurring scenes  
of undergraduate high spirits — and of precise  
sumptuary regulation — running through the  
book, and a fair amount of agreeable indul-  
gence at high tables and in combination rooms.  
Laurence and Helen Fowler do not attempt to  
disguise the undergraduate japes, particularly  
since they are able to show so well elsewhere  
that (in Noel Annan's words about a jocos-  
e book on the university by R. J. White)  
"Cambridge is more than a jolly seminary".  
But anything too lush is dispelled by Augustus  
John's reminiscence of Rupert Brooke (in  
*Chlorascuro*): "A delightful fellow, I thought,  
but perhaps none the better for a too roseate  
environment." The river itself comes to be  
frequently, and not just for rowing or bathing.  
We are reminded of its earlier use for sewerage  
by Whitwell's deft answer when Queen Victoria  
asked why so many places of paper were  
floating in the Cam: "Those, ma'am, are  
notices that bathing is forbidden."

There is a discernible mainstream of critical  
assessment in the humanities, but whether with  
Bentley at Trinity Lodge, Porson in full vomit,  
Housman at table, or Wittgenstein in the  
cinema, the pattern is too much overlaid by  
personality to be clearly recognized. In science  
it is otherwise: we can see in the extracts  
something of the way in which Clerk Maxwell's  
hope of a "unifying" school of scientific

criticism" were realized, drawing on the strong  
(at one time almost exclusive) mathematical  
tradition of the place as well as the rapidly  
established ethos of the Cavendish Labora-  
tory.

The more general atmosphere of Cam-  
bridge, critical, edged, nipping and eager, is  
declared all too often, from the rigorously  
Puritan Emmanuel through the frankness and  
affinities of the Cambridge Conversation  
Society (or Apostles) at various stages of their  
history, down to recent critical debate in the  
English faculty. John Vaizey describes it in a  
lecture to the Royal Institution recalling a  
moment of intellectual insight when he gained  
an aesthetic sense... of the supremacy of truth,  
and of remorseless logic, which should be pursued at any  
cost. Perhaps all that remains of this in my middle  
age is my manner — usually described as "provoca-  
tive". Like other Cambridge men, and perhaps this is  
why so few of them become Prime Ministers, I am  
perennially surprised at the hostility that friendly  
frankness brings.

This and comparable extracts can be matched  
with Donald Davie's reminiscence of Joan  
Bennett's undergraduate tutorials in which  
"the somewhat self-applauding stringency of  
the Cambridge ethos, and its disputatiousness,  
were very much to my taste". That qualifying  
phrase, "somewhat self-applauding", gives  
away more than other contributors might find  
comfortable.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Cancellarian pre-  
face draws attention to the anthology's being  
produced in the year of the University Press's  
450th anniversary celebrations, and the quin-  
centenary of Henry VIII's grant of the printing  
privilege to the University; so it is a pity that  
more trouble was not taken with this first  
trump of the quinquennial fanfare. The  
volume is handsome enough outside, but is  
printed on coated paper (smelling vaguely of  
geraniums) to accommodate some indiffer-  
ently reproduced illustrations which we could  
well have been spared. Some pages are oddly  
misplanned, with disconcerting variations in  
the depth of bottom margins. Editorially, too,  
the text could have done with closer scrutiny:  
it is a pity that we have to read of the Principal  
of Gorton and too many oddities like Harold  
Nicholson, Lawes Dickinson, *England my En-  
gland* and (a particular abhorrence in a Cam-  
bridge book) G. C. Coulton. These faults are,  
however, partly redeemed by the fine 1850  
watercolour on the dust-wrapper, showing the  
King's side of the Parade with pairs of gowned  
dignitaries "walking up and down, from 2 to 4,  
every day of their lives", squaring away in the  
true *Microcosmographia Academica* style that  
Comfort was to encapsulate in 1908.

Cambridge Commemorated is a long book,  
but none the less the compilers, even allow-  
ing for their distaste for meta anecd-  
ote, might have found room for a few more  
twentieth-century "characters" to continue the  
series from earlier times. Something about  
Cockerell's assiduous cultivation of benefac-  
tors for the Fitzwilliam perhaps, or Housman's  
animadversions to the Steward of Trinity on  
the quality of Irish stew (a dish requiring "lots  
of potato and lots of onion. On the last occa-  
sion it not only had neither but was strangely  
and shockingly garnished with dumplings").  
Provost Sheppard's *Times* obituary might have  
been put under contribution (he "also rowed in  
his college boat, as activity which confirmed  
his distaste for all forms of exercise. Indeed his  
life was a successful contradiction of the prin-  
ciple that physical exertion is necessary to  
health"). Oblivious in the *Proceedings of the  
British Academy* are a rich source for any  
anthology of dons and donage, best among  
them for Cambridge purposes: "Gow oo  
Gaselee, whose range of gastronomic experi-  
mentation produced "an unfamiliar corpse sus-  
pended in a Cambridge poulterer's window,  
with the legend 'WALLABY. Reserved for  
the Master and Fellows of Magdalene Col-  
lege'".

Such additions might, however, overload an  
already long text, rich and generally well  
balanced in its coverage, which incidentally is  
fully able to look the excellent *Oxford Book of  
Oxford* in the eye. The compilers have suc-  
ceeded in a task which was similar to that of the  
first "diversa scholiers" of Cambridge who in  
Lydgate's words came  
To other houses of wisdom and science  
And some houses of sured eloquence.

# Self-mastering systems

Adrian Wooldridge

JOHN CHANDOS  
Boys Together: English public schools 1800-  
1864  
412pp. Hutchinson. £15.  
0091392403

In August, 1864, that notable periodical  
*Baily's Monthly Magazine of Sports and Pas-  
times* suggested that it was as easy to under-  
stand the mysteries of the public schools by  
reading second-hand accounts of them as it was  
to appreciate the delicacies of apricot jam by  
listening to descriptions of onions and bacon:  
Men unconnected with the system cannot give credit  
to the exceptional phases of school life, the fagging,  
the discipline, the apparent absence of hard work  
and the necessity of hard play, the cribbing, the  
mutual help and the peculiar code of honour that  
goes so far to making the man, by the exercise of  
character in the world of boyhood.

It is a testimony to John Chandos's imagination  
and erudition that he has managed to refute  
this pronouncement and to provide us with an  
intimate account of the corporate life of the  
unreformed public schools in the dark ages  
between 1800 and 1864. In doing so, he has  
produced a model of popular history, which is  
erudite without being oppressive and witty  
without being vulgar, and which succeeds  
admirably in resurrecting the lighter as well as  
the darker side of public school history.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of  
these schools was the amount of power which  
the masters devolved to the boys. What order  
there was rested on the system of "fagging",  
with young boys rendering a variety of services  
to their older "masters" in return for advice  
and protection. Though the institution was  
shrouded in mystery, it resulted from a simple  
problem of expediency. The schools lacked the  
staff necessary to keep order and had to rely on  
the support of the older boys. Not surprisingly,  
"fagging" aroused the hostility of high-minded  
reformers. George Lewis, an Old Etonian who  
had gone over to the other side, called it "the  
only regular institution of slave labour en-  
forced by brute force which exists in these is-  
lands". But criticisms of the system were frus-  
trated by the conservatism of both parents and  
boys. The parents felt that it provided an in-  
valuable education in life, while the boys were  
more concerned to become masters themselves  
than to see inequalities abolished. In fact,  
attempts to do away with it only stimulated  
bullying. As T. H. Green wrote to his father:  
"the spirit of the age, raving against every-  
thing that sounds like oppression, seems likely  
to establish a worse tyranny in public schools,  
as everywhere else, for it is impossible for  
bullying to be stopped except by preceptors".

When the masters intervened in the delicate  
mechanism of school life, they habitually relied  
on the help of the rod. Dr Keate, the head-  
master of Eton, flogged about ten boys a day  
(except on Sunday) and sometimes got through  
as many as forty or more. But after a few  
beatings, a number of boys found that they  
rather liked the activity. Lord Waterford mis-  
used it so much when he left school that he stole  
the flogging block and installed it at his country  
estate. There, at ceremonial dinners of the  
Block Club, it occupied the place of honour to  
the centre of the table, and after dessert be-  
came the scene of rites congruous with its  
office. Even those boys who did not become  
full members of the "cult of the birch" felt that  
flogging brought them membership of an ex-  
clusive and desirable club. By Hornby's time  
flogging at Eton was said to be a farce, sus-  
tained only by the demand of boys and masters  
alike. An Eton master who refused to flog a  
boy was rebuked by his mother, who said she  
bad "sent her son to Eton to be flogged".

Though flogging was tolerated, other  
attempts to impose adult authority were fier-  
cely resisted. The boys were tireless in defending  
their "liberties". "It seems to us a matter of  
course", observed one commentator, "that our  
public schoolboys should be trusted with lib-  
erties which would astonish foreigners." One  
much cherished liberty was the right to drink  
alcohol. T. H. Green estimated that, when he  
went up to Rugby at the age of fourteen, he was  
the only boy out of 400 who was a "water  
drinker". Boys frequently set up late into the  
night, swigging wine and playing cards, and

those who refused to take part in the de-  
bauchery were subjected to collective vilifica-  
tion. For them it was a matter of honour to  
carry on a ceaseless guerrilla war against the  
authority of their masters. When their tradi-  
tional practices were threatened, they fre-  
quently resorted to open rebellion. "If the old  
rules are to be broken by every master who  
takes it into his head, what are to become the  
liberties of the school?", argued one rebel lead-  
er, "we might as well live under a pure despot-  
ism." Even the smallest breaks in tradition  
could provoke violent opposition. The rebel-  
lion at Eton in 1809 resulted from Keate's re-  
fusal to wear a wig. The boys clearly took  
aesthetics as well as rights seriously. After the  
rebellion at Winchester in 1816, which was  
finally crushed by military intervention, the  
first answer returned to the headmaster's in-  
quiry into the reasons for the outbreak was  
"that you are ugly".

The world which the boys wanted to pre-  
serve was sometimes a brutal and uncomfor-  
table one. When left to their own devices, they  
displayed a genius for tormenting each other.  
They devised rituals of initiation which com-  
bined violence and humiliation in carefully  
measured quantities. They might beat new  
boys with knotted handkerchiefs, stone them  
with rolls baked as hard as pebbles, or force  
them to grasp hot metal objects (a rite known  
as "tin gloves"). At Rugby an unpopular boy  
might be roasted over a fire or else flung into a  
pool of water and mud. Fist fights were com-  
monplace. Gladstone estimated that hardly a  
day passed at Eton without up to four "more or  
less mortal combats". The Revd J. Mathew  
was marked on the face for life in a battle which  
he fought as a boy to vindicate Bishop Blum-  
field's unfavourable review of Dr Samuel But-  
ler's edition of Aeschylus: proof that at least  
some of the boys took the study of classics  
seriously.

These schools naturally won the hostility of  
the improving public. The radical press las-  
terbasted them as nurseries of vice and immor-  
ality, populated by duces who were "now  
flushed with drunkeones, now with where-  
dome pale" and governed by patronage and  
tradition rather than merit and reason. The old  
order fought a prolonged and cunning defen-  
sive campaign against the forces of improve-  
ment. They suggested that reform of the  
schools was but the thin end of a wedge which  
would lead to mob rule and barbarism. They  
appealed to the founders' intentions and the  
sanctity of tradition. They poured scorn on the  
pedigrees and motives of the radicals, suggest-  
ing that they were driven by envy of institutions  
which they had not been privileged to attend.  
In extreme circumstances, they even went so  
far as to consider preemptive reforms. A Fel-  
low of Eton abandoned his initial plan of re-  
pelling the reformers with dog whips and in-  
stead informed the Clarendon committee that  
Eton was not against reform: "the question of  
the greater frequency of puddings has already  
been thought of and discarded."

But even this argument failed to stave off  
reform indefinitely. The radicals found allies  
among the schoolmasters themselves, as the  
pious worried about the state of their pupils'  
souls and the practical despair about the  
quality of their minds. Chandos suggests that  
the rot started with Dr Arnold. Declaring that  
"my love of any piece or person, or institution,  
is exactly the measure of my desire to reform  
them", Arnold had set about turning Rugby  
into a model Christian community. His over-  
sight had any doubts about the virtues of his  
cause, and according to Chandos, lacked the sensiti-  
vity to make a good schoolmaster. "He never  
ties his shoes without asserting a principle",  
noted one observer, "and when he puts on his  
hat... finds himself on an eternal truth".

But the future lay with Arnold rather than  
Keate. A new breed of religious bigots de-  
clared war on the boy's traditional liberties. By  
the end of the century the public schools had  
been transformed into authoritarian and uni-  
form communities, governed by a strict regime  
of adult surveillance and control, and classed  
and clothed according to the boys' prospects  
at games. If you want to understand this cor-  
porate life of the communities which were swept  
away by this lamentable revolution, then you  
can do no better than to read John Chandos's  
excellent book.

# Recounting the wickets

A. L. Le Quesne

DAVID GOWER with DEREK HODGSON  
Heroes and Contempararies  
127pp. Collins. £5.95.  
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Playfair Cricket Annual: 37th Edition  
256pp. Queen Anne Press. £1.50.  
0356102378  
JOHN WOODCOCK  
Wisden Cricketers' Almanack: 121st year  
1,288pp. Queen Anne Press. £9.95.  
0356102394

All books fall somewhere between two ex-  
tremes of a spectrum — those which publishers  
think they can sell, and those which authors  
think they can write. To start — alas — at the  
former end of the spectrum, we have here  
books by what must surely be the two leading  
sex symbols of contemporary cricket, David  
Gower and Imran Khan. As his title indicates,  
David Gower writes (or Derek Hodgson writes  
for him) a series of peo-sketches of his greatest  
cricketing contemporaries. I can only say that  
hardly one word seems to rise above the level  
of cliché: or if it does, it is Derek Hodgson's  
words to the epilogue about David Gower him-  
self, in which he most properly makes the com-  
parison with Woolley, and most aptly quotes  
Neville Cardus quoting George Meredith in

support of it. It is a sad thing to see the most  
beautiful stylist among the batsmen of this age  
led astray into a medium in which he is as much  
at sea as a Mozart set to make pots. Imran  
Khan's is a better book, not least because it is  
an autobiography, and only man's life is of  
interest though few people's apinins are.  
It does, unlike Gower's, have about it the  
qualities of the man (even though it, too, is  
ghosted, by Patrick Murphy) — the panache  
and the swagger that can clearly be traced to  
the intensely elitist and dynastic background of  
Pakistani cricket, as Imran himself makes clear  
enough in the early chapters. The book has not  
much shape and no detachment, but its judg-  
ments on the international cricket of the past  
ten years are intelligent, frank and partial: you  
have here a cricketer's star of the first magni-  
tude in the post-Packer era speaking his mind,  
and like it or leave it, the result is of some  
interest.

So come next to Marcus Williams's antho-  
logy of cricketer letters to *The Times*, a com-  
placent and delightful crackpot English  
publishing enterprise. This is the highbrow en-  
thusiast's bedside book *par excellence*, even  
though it is more a book about *The Times* and  
its readers than about cricket: it is only here  
and there that the serious student of the game  
will feel inclined to make a mark in the margin.  
It is sometimes very funny — my own favourite  
is the letter from the Professor of Moral  
Philosophy at Oxford in 1906 recommending  
that balls allowed to pass by the batsman,  
although within reach, should be called as  
"nears" by the umpire, and scored as minus  
one. The correspondents include many of the  
great — eminent — cricketers of the last hundred  
years (one or two of them, notably Pelham  
Warner, rather too often); a significant sign of  
the times, they also include four professionals,  
all within the last fifteen years and all in charac-  
teristic vein: Boycott and Trueman, polemical;  
Tyson, principled; and Barrington, detached  
and authoritative. The book charts, too, most  
of the great controversies that have rent the  
game during the last century — though rarely at  
anything fuller than *hors d'oeuvre* length.

Two books in this batch belong in a  
different category — anthologies of writings  
and broadcasts: those of John Arlott and E. W.  
Swanton, with little doubt the two best-known  
English commentators since the war. The two  
books are intriguingly different. *A Word From  
Arlott* is, inevitably for a memorial of this ar-  
tist of the spoken word, for the most part a col-  
lection of broadcasts. As is also inevitable, a  
good deal is lost in the translation from one medium  
to another, above all the famous voice — I can't  
help feeling that a cassette would have been a  
better memento. On the whole, though, it is  
remarkable how much of the colour and vivid-  
ness of the original come through. The book is  
by no means confined to Arlott as a cricket

commentator — there are samples also of Arlott  
on soccer, on second-hand bookshops, on Blue  
Vinny cheese and (anyway in an illustration) as  
a policeman, but cricket is, properly, the domi-  
nant theme. The reader is reminded constantly  
that the author is, or was, a poet: his great gift  
as a commentator has always been his capacity  
for immediacy, to capture the essence of the



A view of the first Test at Trent Bridge, 1938:  
reproduced from *The Broadman Era*, recalled by  
Bill O'Reilly and compiled by Jack Egan (207pp,  
with 308 illustrations. Collins. £8.95. 0 00 218123 1).

fleeting scene by isolating the precisely telling  
detail or incident and relaying it to the absent  
listener. There are some beautiful examples of  
this here, though there is much else besides. In  
particular, David Rayvern Allen has included  
the scripts of some cricket broadcasts in which  
Arlott himself plays only a very minor part:  
tributes to Hutton and to Keith Miller by their  
contemporaries, and interviews with famous  
figures of the half-fabulous past, Bowes,  
Kortright and Len Braund. The keenly ob-  
servant may note to this last-mentioned item a  
direct and amusing clash of evidence with a  
later reprint in *The Way to Lord's*, from  
A. C. McLaren, the England captain, about  
the circumstances in which poor Fred Tate  
dropped his famous and crucial catch in the  
Old Trafford Test of 1902, each laying the  
blame on the other; the historian of the game  
may be equally interested to note that in those  
pregoogly days a leg-spinner should regard it as  
natural to bowl to a field with only two men on  
the off side.

E. W. Swanton's *As I Sold At the Time* is a  
contrast in almost every sense. Where Arlott's

most characteristic work is a series of brilliant  
vignettes, Swanton's is a solid even-paced  
narrative; he is a chronicler where Arlott is a  
commentator. Even the unfortunate hint of com-  
placency in this title is not quite irrelevant, for  
where Arlott is a communications man with the  
touch of irreverence, even frivolity, that often  
goes with that role, Swanton speaks unmis-  
takeably with the voice of Lord's and the English  
cricketing establishment, and twenty-nine  
years as the *Daily Telegraph's* cricket corres-  
pondent can have done nothing to change this.  
It is a quality that has both merits and defects  
for a commentator. Swanton's writing lacks  
completely the sparkle of John Arlott's broad-  
casts: there is hardly a memorable phrase or a  
vivid image — scarcely even a good story — to be  
found in his book, for all its length. But in the  
breadth and detail of its coverage of English  
cricket since the war and in the solidity and  
decency of its standards of judgment there  
is good compensation for these weaknesses.  
The opinion pieces are E. W. Swanton's real  
strength, and precision, accuracy and honesty  
are his virtues. In accounts of the great matches  
and great players of the past, the monochrome  
prose and the fluntness of the descriptions on the  
page can lead one on to overlook them; but they  
stand him in good stead when he is discussing  
the great issues which have divided the game in  
his lifetime, he they headline, spurring con-  
tacts with South Africa, the Packer affair, or  
the modern cult of intimidatory fast bowling.  
On all of them, his judgment has worn well,  
and in this context that note of complacency in  
his title is well justified.

John Callaghan's *Yorkshire Pride* — sadly  
ironical though the title sounds in view of the  
events of recent years in the county — is an  
admirably sensible and discriminating brief  
history of the greatest of all English county  
cricket clubs, written to celebrate its hundred  
and fiftieth anniversary: triumphs are duly  
celebrated, disasters and mistakes honestly  
faced. Vic Marks's *Somerset County Cricket  
Scrapbook* is honestly described by its title: a  
gallot through the club's first ninety years in  
ten pages, and then the years of stardom  
treated in much greater detail. David Emery's  
*Who's Who in International Cricket* is a useful  
paperback reference book. Finally, the  
annuals are upon us again: the *Playfair Cricket  
Annual*, which will conveniently fit the pocket,  
and the 1984 *Wisden*, which certainly won't. In  
addition to its comprehensive coverage of first-  
class cricket throughout the world, it this year  
includes interesting articles on the MCC de-  
bate on whether to send a side to South Africa,  
on the development of World Series Cricket in  
Australia and on Zaheer Abbas, as well as the  
editor's customary reflections on the events of  
the bygone cricketing year.

# Green thoughts

Bruce Hepburn

ANGUS MACVICAR  
Golf in My Galloways: Confessions of a  
fairway fanatic  
178pp. Hutchinson. £7.50.  
0091541603

As P. G. Wodehouse and Ian Hay were at  
pains to point out, the game of golf is a good  
deal more about means than about ends. Not  
for nothing did it have its small beginnings in  
the only country where recreations are a  
branch of morality. In the words of Lang Wil-  
lie, quoted approvingly by Angus MacVicar  
in his engaging and occasionally alarming  
account of fairway adventure, *Golf in My Gal-  
loways*, "Learning lads Latin and Greek is easy  
work, but when ye come to play golf ye maun  
hae a held."

Where MacVicar keeps his held and plays his  
golf, is on the southernmost tip of the Mull of  
Kintyre. There the gale bloweth where it list-  
eth, men are men, and boys carry their parents'  
clubs in their galloways (braces to you). With  
the Colonel whose eyes are going, the Sheriff  
whose legs are going and the Schoolmaster  
whose wind has long gone, MacVicar pursues  
perfection. Only a son of the marie could drag

the name of his Maker so unblushingly into an  
activity which is not, strictly speaking, any of  
that Functionary's business. He believes that  
God, and golf, gave a friend strength to abjure  
strong drink. "Would to God", he says, "that  
the governments of the world were put in the  
hands of a golfing meritocracy."

MacVicar's son Jock, a golfing journalist,  
contributes five evocative chapters on his  
heroes and their heroics, but it is to the exploits  
of Angus and of his partners and opponents  
that the heart warms. His account of the last  
round of his saintly father, the rain dripping  
from his red moustache and his fingers clench-  
ing like those of the Boston Strangler, is as  
funny and nearly as ferocious as anything in  
golfing literature. For the extremity of ferocity  
need MacVicar in his partner Sandy Mitchell on  
the seventeenth green. Thinking to concede a  
putt, he catches sight of Sandy's face. His ex-  
pression is, he finds, He is chewing tobacco  
(and shooting it out in little squirts over his  
opponents' feet) so hard that brown foam  
flecks his lips. His red-rimmed eyes are bleaz-  
ing. He is moving his head from side to side  
with terrible emphasis. MacVicar thinks again.  
No doubt he recalls his own maxim that, by  
sticking strictly to the fairway of golfing ethics,  
you can help to further the idea of love for your  
neighbour.

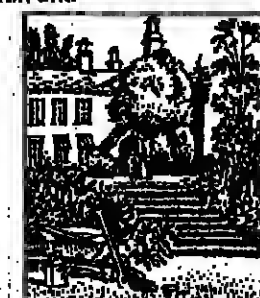
# Summer Books Issue



At home with George Herbert  
Rosemary Hill writes about George Herbert's  
house at Bemerton, in Wiltshire, which has  
inspired writers and painters for 300 years.

Poet's hands on the landscape  
Ken Lemmon visits Wordsworth's garden at  
Rydal Mount, Cumbria, and

assesses its attraction for thousands of visitors  
each year.  
Book reviews include: Margonite Laski  
discussing *The Canonville Lawn*, by Mary Wesley  
and *The Common Reader*, by Virginia Woolf.  
Christopher Neve on *A Way of Life*, by Jim Ede.  
Frank Davis on *Antoine Watteau*,  
by Donald Posner and Kenneth McLeish on  
*The Journal of a Disappointed Man* by  
W. N. P. Barbellion.



War through a poet's eyes Stephen and Elizabeth Usherwood compare  
a previously unpublished diary from the *Mary Rose* which provides prose  
corroboration of John Donne's verse account of the sinking of Cadiz in 1596.  
Inside *Wuthering Heights* The interiors and furnishings of Emily Brontë's  
novel were based on fact. Jane Grury Nelson describes the houses concerned.

# COUNTRY LIFE

ON SALE NOW



# Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

At W. H. Allen Ltd the fiction editor, Mike Bailey, freely admits that "old pornography" is part of the firm's stock in trade. It sells regularly and well. In fact he's rather proud of publishing a newly discovered piece of old pornography, *Opus Pistorum* (that is, The Miller's Tale) by the late Henry Miller (288 pp. £9.95. 0 491 03003 7). Old pornography it is, certainly, but doubts have been expressed as to whether the author was indeed Henry Miller.

The circumstances of Miller's authorship are described in a sworn affidavit, printed as an epilogue, made by the man who owns the copyright in the text, one Milton Lubovski. In 1940 he was running a bookshop in Hollywood with a side-line in under-the-counter erotica. Miller pitched up there, friendless and broke. (He returned to America in 1940, and spent over a year travelling for what was to become *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*.) Lubovski and Miller became firm friends. Late in 1941, still short of money, Miller suggested that he write some pornography for Lubovski, at the rate of a dollar a page. Lubovski agreed, took the copyright, and produced a number of retyped copies, one of which he kept until after Miller's death in 1980. Grove Press published *Opus Pistorum* last Autumn, and it is receiving European publication this Spring.

All sides agree that if *Opus Pistorum* is indeed Henry Miller's tale it is a long way from his best work, reading as it does like a coarsened version of *Quiet Days in Clichy*. There are six stories — sample titles: "La Rue de Sorew" and "France in My Pants" — recounting a series of monotonous, lewd and violent sexual acts performed by an authorial I, and characters named after *Quiet Days* . . . . The unauthentic feel of the prose so alarmed a Henry Miller fan, Philip Bonafont, that he persuaded the bookshop from which he bought his copy to take it back. He began to investigate, and got in touch with the TLS to express his conviction that the book is not by Henry Miller. Bonafont is a twenty-eight-year-old sales rep who makes no claim to scholarly authority beyond his passionate study of the works of Henry Miller. "Behind the lines" started an investigation of its own.

Doubters of the authenticity of the MS include Miller's customary publisher in this country, John Calder, who was insufficiently impressed when it was offered to him in New York to publish it. The book carries the copyright symbol of the Miller Estate (which shares Lubovski's royalty), but the Estate's literary agent, George Hoffmann, was not completely convinced when I spoke to him in Paris. He thought it "almost definite that Henry Miller took part" in producing the work. Jay Martin's biography of Miller, *Always Merry and Bright* (1978), says that Miller "farmed out the job to an acquaintance with the suggestion that she simply take the coat of *Cancer* and the Paris scene and run amok with it".

The acquaintance was Anais Nin; her *Journals 1939-44* (1970) describe her taking over a Henry Miller commission to write pornography for a dollar a page. But the date in 1940, and the commission came from a collector who claimed to be acting for another party. (According to Jay Martin this was an Oklahoma oil millionaire, recently ideologised as Roy Johnson.) Anais Nin records that she was told to leave but the poetry and descriptions of anything but sex. . . . But the erotica she produced are nothing like the phalloscopic *Opus Pistorum*. She also records that Miller did not want to write pornography, pure, as it were, and "after a while it palled on him".

Mr. Lubovski, now aged seventy-one, has retired from the book trade, and lives outside Paris, where I spoke to him. He explained that he had not released the text during Miller's lifetime because Miller had expressly asked him not to. In his published affidavit he said that he had made five copies from Miller's original (which no longer exists). In an interview, however, he said he had probably produced about twenty, for he had gone into the army in 1943, and when times were hard after the war he would produce more copies. In those days, he explained, such works were

freely copied and passed from hand to hand — rather like *sonzidat* literature, I suggested. As a result there are many copies of *Opus Pistorum*. Barney Rosset of Grove Press bought a copy in an antiquarian bookshop shortly before Lubovski's lawyer approached him with a view to publication. According to Lubovski, "Miller never denied that he had written it".

Lubovski, a friendly and free-spoken man, with a solid reputation as a book-dealer, has several heavyweights on his side, not least his American and British publishers. Mike Bailey says that "having read the text, it is undoubtedly by Henry Miller". William Burroughs and Terry Southern agree that this is "vintage Miller". But Philip Bonafont remains unconvinced. A text attributed to Miller has been known of for some time. It may be that Miller's known circumstances in 1940, as described by Anais Nin, have supplied the authenticating framework for Miller's alleged activities in California in 1941 and 1942.

The irony is that even if *Opus Pistorum* can be shown beyond a shadow of doubt to be by Henry Miller, it is still a very bad book indeed.

\* \* \*

"Has its bounty ever enabled man to bring forth a fine tragedy, epic history, novel or work of science?" A question asked, not of the moribund Literature Department of the Arts Council, but of the Royal Literary Fund (before it acquired the regal prefix) in 1833. The answer is that the Literary Fund was created in 1788 to relieve the distress of authors, and not to assist their writing, even though it has happened that recipients of its charity have subsequently become subscribers to its funds.

And at least one substantial work of history has resulted from the Fund's activities, with the publication on microfilm of its complete archives from 1790 to 1918. The Fund's archivist, Dr Nigel Cross, has produced a printed catalogue, guide, index and brief history of the Fund, with a foreword by the retiring President, Janet Adam Smith (72pp. World Microfilms Publications. £15. 0 85035 000 0). The case histories in the files, including as they do applications from Coleridge, Peacock, Leigh Hunt, Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, constitute a unique research resource in themselves, but there are also the minute books of the Committee and the documents relating to the anniversary fund-raising dinner which was held from 1793 to 1939. The history of the Fund is a mirror to literary history, as it reflects the changing circumstances, values and ambitions of the literary establishment.

Confidentiality demands that we wait some time for the microfilm of the archives from 1918 to 1984, but, though the Fund no longer has its own house in Soho and has moved to cramped quarters in Temple Chambers in the City, its work continues much as before. In 1831 the historian John Watkins made his eighteenth application to the Fund on the death of his son, the consumption of his daughter and lunacy of his wife, having already lost three other sons. In 1981 the Fund was able to help "an elderly author of social and philosophical studies," who was "so hard hit by inflation that it looked as if he might have to sell his library and bungalow; but with a grant from the Fund he has been able to stay on in his home".

Besides inflation, the principal change in the circumstances of needy writers has been the arrival of the welfare state, and the Fund is careful to ensure that full social security benefits are claimed first. But many of the grim cases recorded in the Fund's reports for the recent years have needed the compassion of an organization such as this. The Fund dispenses nearly £100,000 annually, mainly in grants, though it has some thirty pensioners receiving between £500 and £1,500 a year. Half-a-dozen applications are considered at the monthly meetings of the Fund's Committee (a roll-call of the literary Great and Good). The applicants' finances will have been thoroughly investigated, but the Committee makes its decision first of all on literary merit, and a sample will be read of the applicant's publications. Only then is the grant assessed, accord-

ing to need. The Fund's secretary, Anthony Mackenzie Smith, told me that in dozen applications had been turned down on literary grounds over the past year.

The Fund's own resources came from investments of around half a million pounds. It is subscribed to by the Queen, but has never received government funding of any kind. An important source is the royalties that it has been left in authors' estates. Thanks to the popularity of Winnie the Pooh and the activities of Walt Disney, it will receive nearly £100,000 through the estate of A. A. Milne this year. The Fund is also the residuary legatee of the Somerset Maugham estate, which should assist its income in a few years' time.

Such legacies, however, are limited by the term of copyright (there are no more royalties from Rupert Brooke, for instance). The Fund is aware that it is threatened by inflation just as much as its applicants. With the publication of the archives of 1790-1918 (which should in itself earn money for the Fund) Janet Adam Smith is retiring as President. Her successor, a former editor of the TLS, Arthur Crook, is planning a fund-raising drive which hopes to tap the new-found source of wealthy authors' PLR.

It is unfortunate that this drive will coincide with the Centenary Appeal being launched by the Society of Authors. Since no one else seems interested in helping writers, especially young writers, with the unprofitable business of writing worthwhile books, the Society is setting up its own charity, the Authors' Foundation. But whereas the Authors' Foundation will be intended to assist the production of fine tragedies, epics, histories and novels, the Royal Literary Fund will continue to assist those many sad authors who find that the production of such works does not in itself bring proper reward.

\* \* \*

Librarians are not generally thought of as a particularly militant bunch, but when the staff of Westminster Council's Little Portland Street branch library conducted a nine-day occupation of their premises last month, and the entire staff of Westminster Public Libraries went on strike when two of those concerned were disciplined, it became clear that the bookworms are beginning to turn.

The public library service, like other departments of local government, has been under pressure for some time. The first round of cuts to the service in the last year of the Labour government went virtually without protest, but the renewed pressure since 1979 has led to stiffening resistance to staff shortages, and louder protests about cuts in book purchasing funds (book funds have fallen some 20 per cent since 1979).

There are 119 library authorities in England and Wales, thirty-two in London alone. The library is a very local service, and until now the campaigns to save libraries from closure have

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 172  
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than May 25. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct — in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.  
Entries, marked "Author, Author 172" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Pitney House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on June 1.

1 Mrs Herriot did not proceed. She was out one to detect the hidden charms of Baedeker. Some of the information seemed to her unnecessary, all of it was dull. Whereas Philip could never read "The view from the Rocca (small gratuity)" is finest at sunset without a catnap at the heart.

2 Leopora herself always struck me as being remarkably well educated. At any rate, she knew beforehand all that Florence had to tell her. Perhaps she got it up out of Baedeker before Florence was up to the morning.

3 Now what was this, Max wondered. An Egyptologist was he, or only reciting from the pages of his Baedeker?

Competition No 168  
Winner: William Beekwith  
Answers:

been local ones. In 1979 planned closures in Hertfordshire led to the creation of Libraries Open And Free, a local group of librarians, teachers and library users. Hertfordshire LOAF has had a number of successful campaigns, and the idea is spreading elsewhere. Save London's Libraries was an active supporter of the Little Portland Street occupation, where closure was resisted on the grounds that Westminster was making a cut for purely political reasons. The library was not underused, nor was the library budget overspent, but Westminster wished to be seen to be making cuts. The library is now empty, and the books have been taken out of circulation and blacked.

The local campaign groups in Rotherham, Leicestershire, Cheshire, Haverhill, Essex, Bolton, Derbyshire and elsewhere have now come together to fight The Library Campaign. A first meeting was held in Sheffield in February, and a second on May 19 will seek to broaden the basis of the organization. The first issue of *The Campaigner* is already available.

So far no librarian is known to have lost his or her job because of the cuts, but the shrinkage in the system has increased pressure on staffs severely. Much of the enthusiasm for resistance has come from young middle-management, and there is obvious self-interest in mounting the Library Campaign. NALGO is lending its support, while the Libraries Association is standing aside. But the disappearance of libraries and the decline in book purchases increasingly calls into question the argument that literature is adequately supported through the public library service.

\* \* \*

It is always pleasant to have one's critical opinions confirmed by others, but Simon Digby, who contributed a review of Mark Zebrowski's *Deccan Painting* to the September 16, 1983 issue of the TLS must feel overwhelmed by the conformity to his view of those of one Jehaara Wasi, who reviewed the same book for the *Hindustan Times* on November 23 following.

Digby's review begins: "The characteristic landscape of the Deccan, of which elements recur in these paintings, is a high plateau strewn with stones . . .". Wasi's begins: "The characteristic landscape of the Deccan, of which elements recur in these paintings, is a high plateau strewn with stones . . .". Although shorter by a few lines than Digby's review, Wasi's echoes his views. Indeed his words, with meticulous accuracy, to the extent that only an alerted eye could tell them apart. But then plagiarism always was the sincerest form of flattery.

The Archives of the Royal Literary Fund are available from World Microfilms Publications, 62 Queen's Grove, London NW8 6ER at £3,000 for the complete set. The address of the Royal Literary Fund is 144 Temple Chambers, Temple Avenue, London EC4Y 0DT.

1 . . . reached my preparatory school supposing that I had been delivered to my parents by a staff, a naivety that won me the ridicule of other boys. Indeed, considering that I afterwards learnt of my father's behaviour, and of the licence and impetuosity of his relationship with my mother, I think I am a trifle dishonest of them to have excluded me completely from that freedom of thought to which they themselves seem to have indulged.  
J. R. Ackerley, *My Father and Myself*.

2 I must have been a considerable embarrassment to my father. I sat in his office all day reading, while his staff, his contributors, and his proprietors came in and out. Eventually, I suppose, people found out the reason I was always there, but I am told it caused a great deal of comment, not ungenerally, at the time. I didn't worry. I loved to read, I loved to be with my father, now the only parent I could trust, and after home the busy office seemed like a rest camp.  
Dom Moraes, *My Son's Father*.

3 Then, abruptly would come a ring at the front door. My father would bend at me as a corrupted brow, and murmur, under his breath, "What's this?" and I would, at the sound of footsteps, would bolt into the vestibule, and round the garden into the portico of the house, and there I would stand, waiting for the next visitor.

4 I was a visitor more serious than the postman of the day-gatherer, I used to go forth and come back with a wanderer home. It was a caller, above all a female caller, it was my privilege to prevaricate, remembering innocently that "Papa is out!"

Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son*.

# Letters

## Polish Communism

Sir, — Tadek Jarski (Letters, April 6) takes me to task (in what I consider to be a highly offensive way, which even his involvement with Solidarity does not justify) for ignoring a number of aspects of Communism in Poland, and for not acknowledging the harshness of martial law under General Jaruzelski. The latter supposedly proves that "totalitarianism" is a term appropriate to the current political regime in Poland.

The concluding paragraph of my review was of course meant to apply to the general trend of the post-1956 period, and not to what has happened in Poland since December 1981. The long period of open political opposition (1976-80), followed by the 'Solidarity' period, are simply inexplicable within the framework of "totalitarianism". I would maintain that even the huge increase in the amount of coercion and political opposition since 1981 does not, by itself, justify the term "totalitarianism", unless it is used merely as a term of abuse. Neither Hannah Arendt nor Friedrich and Brzezinski, to mention the leading authorities on the subject, regarded the post-revolutionary terror of the Leninist type as a manifestation of "totalitarianism". I think even Jarski might agree that General Jaruzelski's regime fits still some way to go before it approaches the Soviet Union of the 1920s. The treatment of the Kronstadt rebels and its aftermath (Kronstadt, incidentally, was the only open working-class revolt against the Communist Party in Soviet history) was qualitatively different from the treatment of the Solidarity opposition, which does not mean, of course, that the latter was in any way justifiable.

As for the list of Communist misdeeds in Jarski's letter, I am very well aware of them. An academic review of two scholarly books does not call for such a list. If Poland were free to shape her political system and beyond the reach of the Soviet Army, comparisons with Britain would be meaningless: as it is, the rest of Eastern Europe makes a more suitable reference point. By that standard the treatment of the Catholic Church in Poland — and other aspects of Polish Communism — clearly distinguish it from its neighbours. This is true despite the massive regression of the last year and a half.

ZBIGNIEW PELCZYNSKI,  
c/o Department of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Not having seen the *Outline of Albanian Literature* which served as Mr Korn's source-book, I cannot judge whether its author is an honourable man (ie, *uq burr i nderim*), or borrow from Bishop Noli's rendering of Mark Antoni's speech in *Jul Qesari* or merely an apologist for the current Albanian regime. If the latter, one might expect him to say little or nothing about Father Gjergj Fishta, surely the most revered figure in recent Albanian literature. The late C. M. Bowra quoted from Fishta's spirited epic poem of 1937, *Lahuta e Malcis* (The Highland Lute) in his *Heroic Poetry* while implying that his acquaintance with it was limited to the German translation by Max Lambertz (a handsome annotated Albanian edition was published in Rome in 1958).

Assuming that some people can pronounce Fishta's name without so much as an inward chuckle, I should like to urge greater forbearance for poor Albania, some ruth amid the alien Korn!

## Balkan History

Sir, — Norman Stone's review of Barbara Jelavich's *History of the Balkans* (March 16) contains a remarkable amount of misinformation about Albania in the brief space which he devotes to a consideration of that country.

"The language has no known affinities or origins." In fact, Albanian has long been recognized as a separate branch of Indo-European, holding somewhat the same position to that large family of languages as Greek or Armenian; its origins are considered by most linguists to be Illyrian.

"Catholic Ghegs [sic — the current spelling is Oeq] in the north, Moslem Tosks in the centre and south, with an Orthodox group . . .". It is true that the Catholic minority (approximately 10 per cent of the population) was concentrated in the north, but there were a great many Oeq Muslims in the north as well. The centre of Albania is primarily Geg-speaking, not Tosk, and in addition to the Sunni Muslims there and in the Tosk-speaking south, there was an important Bektashi (Sufi) minority whose members played a major role in the Albanian nationalist movement. The Orthodox were concentrated in the south, mostly in regions which had come under Greek influence.

"There would be an Albanian emigration [after the fifteenth century] to Serbia, which nowadays contains more Albanians than there are at home." I assume Mr Stone refers to the Albanians in Kosovo, an area which, according to the archaeological evidence, had been inhabited by the ancestors of the Albanians long before any Slavs had ever penetrated the region and which continued to be inhabited by Albanians, albeit in smaller numbers, throughout the history of the region. In 1980 the estimated population of Albania was 2,670,000.

the April 1981 Yugoslav census states that there are 1,730,000 Albanians in Kosovos.

"For many centuries the Albanians counted as the Turks' most feared collaborators." The feelings of nationalism which distinguished Skanderbeg's twenty-five-year resistance to Ottoman domination continued to be manifested throughout the period of Turkish rule and Albanians were impressed into the Turkish army much against their will. To speak of them as "collaborators" is grossly to insult the Albanian nationality and completely to misrepresent the centuries-long Albanian struggle for independence from the Ottoman yoke.

The fact that Albania is a small country whose history and culture is little known in the West is no excuse for the flippant ignorance displayed by Mr Stone in his review.

LEONARD FOX,

98 Queen Street, Charleston, South Carolina 29401.

## Albanian Writers

Sir, — If Eric Korn finds even the names of Albanian writers innately funny (Remeinders, February 17), I suppose this must be reckoned a spiritual sin for which he may yet have to answer. I had hoped that by this time some doughty Albautologist would have entered the lists to confound Mr Korn in the name of "Scandarbeli, prince d'Épire", as Montaigne called that archetypal Albanian hero. In default of such a champion, a mere Albanophile might protest that Naim Frashëri and Pashko Vasa (not Vaso) sound somewhat more melodious in their native tongue than in English doggerel. And although we are advised to "pass rapidly over Fen S. Noli", many American Albanians will continue to invoke with respect the memory of their highly controversial bishop even if they have never read a line of his careful translations of Shakespeare into Albanian.

Not having seen the *Outline of Albanian Literature* which served as Mr Korn's source-book, I cannot judge whether its author is an honourable man (ie, *uq burr i nderim*), or borrow from Bishop Noli's rendering of Mark Antoni's speech in *Jul Qesari* or merely an apologist for the current Albanian regime. If the latter, one might expect him to say little or nothing about Father Gjergj Fishta, surely the most revered figure in recent Albanian literature. The late C. M. Bowra quoted from Fishta's spirited epic poem of 1937, *Lahuta e Malcis* (The Highland Lute) in his *Heroic Poetry* while implying that his acquaintance with it was limited to the German translation by Max Lambertz (a handsome annotated Albanian edition was published in Rome in 1958).

Assuming that some people can pronounce Fishta's name without so much as an inward chuckle, I should like to urge greater forbearance for poor Albania, some ruth amid the alien Korn!

GORDON M. MESSING,  
Department of Classics, Cornell University, Goldwin Smith Hall, Ithaca, New York.

## 'The Sinking of the Belgrano'

Sir, — Lawrence Freedman (Letters, April 20), abandons cool reason for hot indignation in his anxiety to reject evidence and argument that do not support his own theories relating to the sinking of the Belgrano two years ago. As a result he offers a version of the failed peace talks — involving Peru, the United States, Britain and Argentina — that is confused, out-of-date and wrong.

He claims the only additional information provided by Alexander Haig was that he and Francis Pym "worked all day on a new [peace] draft" on May 2. Haig said nothing of the kind. He recalled in his memoirs working all day with President Fernando Belaunde Terry of Peru on a simplified peace proposal which he said was accepted in principle by Britain and Argentina before the Belgrano was destroyed. Perhaps in the tradition of academic honesty Freedman will withdraw his assertion that his confused presentation of Haig's account "contradicts the suggestion in Gavshon's book that the relevant Haig-Pym meeting was over by lunchtime on May 2, before the Belgrano was actually sunk".

Freedman describes my reading of Haig as a "distortion" because I interpreted the American's words as meaning just what he had intended — that Belaunde had "gained acceptance in principle" from both parties before and not after the sinking on May 2. But his judgment is out of date. Plainly Freedman has overlooked or ignored the corrections authorized by Haig (*Sunday Telegraph*, April 8) concerning the erroneous dates he used for various developments, including his exchanges with Belaunde and the attack on the Belgrano. Perhaps he will agree that his charge of "distortion" was not only wrong but also somewhat unprofessional in view of his failure to check his facts.

Freedman finds it "outrageous" that I should have cited Haig's statement to heck up what he calls my "increasingly desperate efforts to maintain a sense of scandal" about the sinking. What he has not yet grasped, as if he were a laggard student in one of his own seminars, is that any "sense of scandal" that may exist has been the result of the persisting discrepancies in governmental accounts of what happened.

Yet whether Freedman or others choose to ignore them or not it is clear that the truth, bit by bit, is beginning to emerge. We now know from the Prime Minister that the Belgrano was sighted on May 1, not May 2 as previously claimed; that the War Cabinet knew of the Peruvian peace initiative before the attack order was transmitted (BBC, *Panorama*, April 16); and that Pym, despite earlier denials, was on the phone to Chequers discussing the change in the Rules of Engagement to permit the Belgrano's destruction.

ARTHUR GAVSHON,

19 Stormont Road, London NE6.

Sir, — The debate on the sinking of the Belgrano, conducted in your columns, has been transformed by the brilliant investigative journalism of the BBC's *Panorama* programme on the outbreak of the Falklands war, into a much wider debate on how wars may start in the late twentieth century: including nuclear ones.

Let me attempt to summarize the developments, as they emerge from this investigation.

1. The British task force is sent. While obviously ready for battle, its two objectives could be achieved without it. These are (a) the withdrawal of the Argentine forces and the return to the status quo ante from the British Government's point of view; (b) the demonstration of determination to resist force by a member of the "Western alliance" — Washington's view, as stated by General Haig.

2. Intensive negotiations by Haig fail to persuade the Argentine Junta that the British will fight.

3. The first British military operations, notably the bombing of Stanley, answer this question. But, while establishing the base for an Argentine readiness to negotiate, they also stimulate nationalist reactions on both sides. More to the point, they produce a conflict between the political logic of the situation and the military logic, which becomes increasingly dominant. One requires restraint and delay in action, the other the opposite.

4. The fog of war brings its complications. An (erroneous) report of a British landing brings the Argentine navy into action. When the report proves mistaken, it is ordered back to port: but the Belgrano is at sea, though now heading away from the British.

5. As time runs out, Peru, convinced of the Argentine readiness to negotiate, and strongly backed by the USA, attempts a peaceful settlement. It faces the lesser difficulty of delay (negotiating a formula acceptable to both sides, the time needed to persuade all sectors represented in the Junta) and the greater difficulty that the British evidently do not believe that Argentina is serious. It is also possible that by this time the prospect of a victorious war tempts some in the British War Cabinet, but this is pure speculation.

6. At this point the record is obscure, because of a flat contradiction between the statements of General Haig and the representative of the then British War Cabinet interviewed on the programme. The historian can only note that the element of evasiveness and prevarication in the British statements is more obvious than in the mutually consistent Argentine, Peruvian and Argentine statements, which

claim that a satisfactory formula is close and could be finalized with minimum delay. This appears to be denied by the British.

7. What is clear is that military logic now overrides everything in London. The War Cabinet, which appears to pay little attention to the negotiations, gives permission, after an apparently almost casual discussion, for attacks on Argentine warships outside the exclusion zone (ie, the Belgrano, shadowed by a submarine). Given the assumption that no settlement is in sight, this makes sense on purely military grounds: strike the first blow and force the Argentine navy out of action. But that assumption is wrong. A delay of a few hours might have made all the difference. As is demonstrated by

8. As the Argentine Junta is ready to finalize the document — whose chances of success are so great that the Peruvian Government actually officially telexes that agreement has been reached — the news of the sinking of the Belgrano is brought into the conference room. Peace has also been sunk.

Big wars may start like this small, costly and pointless one: when one or both sides in a crisis do not believe in the readiness of the other to negotiate seriously, thus allowing military logic, always in contradiction with the logic of diplomacy, to prevail. Peace is too serious a matter to be left to generals and admirals — or to politicians who are, or like to see themselves as, war-lords.

E. J. HOBBSAWM,  
Hirkbeck College, London WC1.

## 'Cub'

Sir, — While Naomi Segal and David Nathan (Letters, April 27) start from almost diametrically opposed views of the relationship between a poem's "meaning" and its "context", they both reach the same conclusion, namely that little short of an explicit, extra-textual statement by the author can rescue a poem's ironies from remaining forever undecidable.

Surely this is not so. Irony, *pace* Ms Segal, does not depend upon the immediate (and ephemeral) cultural context in which a poem may happen to find itself: a good poem is its own context — and "Cub" is playing on different registers, from the self-consciously literary diction of the opening line to the clichés of fashionable journalism, is more than sufficient to establish the necessary distance and irony of regard between poet and persona. The red flag is there for all to see, even if we do not all see it.

Again, *pace* Mr Nathan, while I should hope that we would all agree in finding the phrase "Old Testament shitters", if proffered simply as a term of abuse, extremely offensive, our response to it can be radically altered, not because it appears in one journal rather than another, but because of the other words with which it is joined — "Well, nobody looks for a *movie* from these Old Testament shitters". To deny the relevance to any discussion of "Cub" of the carefully modulated ambiguity of this line, indicating as it does both the mass media through which news of the "real world" is filtered to us, and our own passive response to those media, is to deny poetry the resources essential to its own search for honesty; and doubly to misunderstand the poem.

PETER SNOWDON,  
New College, Oxford.

## 'Le Regard éloigné'

Sir, — In his review of Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Le Regard éloigné* (April 13), Rodney Needham asserts that the works of the French anthropologist make better sense as a surrealist enterprise than a scientific one. This assertion, however cunning and however illuminating it is on some aspects of Lévi-Strauss's contribution to anthropology, calls for some remarks.

I fear that what may strike the British as common features between Lévi-Strauss's structuralism and André Breton's surrealism turn out to be nothing more than their both being French. In these two cases indeed, cutting across science and art, is displayed a particular notion of the role of theory in an intellectual venture. This notion is quite foreign to the British mind. At the beginning of the century, Pierre Duhem, in *La Théorie physique*, noticed the English ability to grasp a

Handwritten note: "The red flag is there for all to see, even if we do not all see it."



Kinds of surrender

David Kelley

PAM GEMS

Csmille

The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

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With *La Dame aux camélias* (the novel was published in 1848 and the dramatized version first performed in 1852), the younger Alexandre Dumas created a powerful myth—perhaps because he discovered a particularly effective blend of titillation, provocation and confirmation of middle-class values. The choice of a high-class whore as heroine seems calculated to attract the prurient. But the novel certainly, and to a lesser extent the play, offer more than this. The novel hints very subtly at the interdependence of prostitution and middle-class notions of love and marriage—simultaneously commercial contract and idealization of erotic urges. It suggests the inescapable logic of prostitution as a means to economic independence for under-privileged women, but since Marguerite, the heroine, is presented as being more self-aware and more self-reliant than the naïvely idealistic and conventionally possessive Armand, who manages to seduce her away from her life of immorality, it even allows the suspicion to be entertained that prostitution might be the only means to financial independence, and thus personal freedom, for apparently privileged women in nineteenth-century society.

These potentially provocative and subversive perceptions are, however, neutralized by Marguerite's transcendent act of renunciation of her love for Armand in the face of the demands of the respectability of the middle-class family. And the play, more clearly than the novel, concludes with the tear-jerking pathos of Marguerite's death at the moment of reconciliation with Armand, and her endorsement, both of his father's moral blackmail and of his own boorish insensitivity. For the modern reader or spectator, however, distanced by time if not by class from the Dumas novel and play, even this conclusion tends to point to the fundamental hypocrisy of the values proposed.

It is for this reader or this spectator that Pam Gems has attempted to update and radicalize the myth. The problem she poses can be summarized as: What is the alternative? Is there any way of escaping relationships based on commercial transaction? Not feeling bound by the conventions of the nineteenth-century well-made play, she has drawn principally from the richer, less coherently consecutive, more morally ambivalent text of the novel. But the plot is also modified in ways which significantly alter the implications of the whole.

Armand's father, for example, is not a solidly respectable and moderately affluent bourgeois, but a wealthy aristocrat, and poss-

ibly the father of Marguerite's child. This change in Armand's social status weakens the force of the discussion in some ways. If the father makes a plea to his son to give up his disreputable mistress, it is not in terms of capitalist bourgeois ethics or economics, but in terms of the quasi-feudal responsibility of the aristocrat of the *ancien régime* towards the family estates and those living on them. The switch in Armand from the arrogant public-school boy of the scene where he first meets Marguerite to the tenderly class-conscious lover of the second half of the play, in revolt against parental values, is abrupt and not totally convincing.

But the fact that Armand is wealthy energizes the Marguerite of Gems's play. She sells her possessions to live with him in the country, not because he cannot afford to keep her in the style to which she is accustomed, as in the Dumas version, but because, this time, she cannot allow herself to be involved in a financial transaction. And her decision to give him up is not a disinterested self-abnegation for the cause of the middle-class family—the marriage of Armand's pure (naïve) sister—but a contract forced on her by the threat of separation from her child. She accepts defeat in face of superior force, but wins something in return—an education for her son. It is a surrender of kinds—not least to the law of transactions—but not an unconditional one. No comfortable solution is proposed to the questions posed by the play, but at least the sentimental pathos of Dumas's dénouement is avoided. Marguerite dies with a different kind of dignity, and her friend, Prudence, asserts: "some of us might prefer the life [of prostitution], given the alternatives."

The contradictions introduced into the character of Armand make heavy demands on the acting of Nicholas Farrell. He confronts these with subtlety and strength. But the modification of the role of Marguerite herself offers Frances Barber the opportunity to display a considerable range and wealth of talent. Convincingly consumptive, condescendingly seductive, erotically maternal, vulgar, vulnerable, passionate and defiant in turn she shows the versatility and energy necessary to give substance to this new version of the Lady of the Camélias.

Ron Daniels's production as a whole works very well. The pace and rhythm are finely tuned, and the theatrical space is skilfully used. Indeed the intimately open stage of *The Other Place*, with its sparsely stylized simplicity of set, and relatively elaborate authenticity of costume, seems both to emphasize the distance which is being created from the moral and formal traditions of the nineteenth-century bourgeois drama, and to draw attention to the play's contact with the mythic form of those traditions.

All dressed up

Martin Dodsworth

SHAKESPEARE

The Merchant of Venice  
Royal Shakespeare Theatre,  
Stratford-upon-Avon

Remembering the dire Year of the White Cube at Stratford, when everything was staged inside a large white shoe-box, and hearing that the first production this year strips the stage virtually to bare walls, you might be a little anxious lest *The Merchant of Venice* should get the same treatment. The first sight of the stage will reassure you. It's very simple—there are no steps, no pillars, no walls even, just a rectangular area defined by richly patterned red hangings, the floor carpeted in rose, a few cushions scattered about, a few gill-frame chairs, cushioned also. The effect is sumptuous: the wealth of Venice manifest in an oriental interior whose mystery is enhanced by the two red-robed figures playing on pipe-organs in either corner of the enclosure. The hint of wealth's domesticity, the private room as a merchant's realm, where the vasty expensive musical instruments evoke the romantic yearnings of the fairy-tale businessman, Bassanio the merchant venturer indulges the passions that his fellow merchant Antonio has to repress. The designer Uitz has produced a most impressive frame for the play. His costumes too are excellent. The young men glitter in sequined white and rose (Antonio is also sequined, but in black), Portia is dressed in a gown whose full skirt and sleeves of dark-blue silk, contrasting with the tight, white-embroidered bodice, set her off perfectly as a desirable object, and Shylock's gaudy ruffles flutters and streams with smoky malice.

But these costumes and this set create problems for the company which for the most part have still to be overcome. The young men's outfits, though magnificent, take a deal of wearing; they dictate the part the actor has to play—a jewelled codpiece to the fore inhibits fine points of interpretation. Only James Simmons's Gratiano as yet convincingly presents the carefree carriage that should go with so much glitter. And this seems to have had the effect of driving other members of the company to will the play to a life it should simply assume from the start. Frances Tomelty as Portia and Ian McDiarmid as Shylock give their parts all they've got, but the play, least of all in this production, doesn't ask for that. As a result the audience is never able to throw off the sense that they're only acting—and sometimes overacting.

McDiarmid's Shylock starts as a high-pitched, crooning, wheedling comedian, his accent a droll indicator of the Jew's foreign-

ness. He skips and jumps and leads Antonio the nose up to the offer of the bond, giving (it seems) accepted as a challenge. The challenge is last sight of, and Shylock's character is made the turning-point of the play, giving the Jew to his obsessive demand for revenge. McDiarmid uses the lower range of his voice to mime Shylock's grief, shouts, groans and once more leaps in the air, the world Antonio is in his power. This time, Shylock, whose glowing KGB man from *Apocalypse* comes unerringly to the fore in the first act, welcome as it is, is a somewhat start, has no force of character behind it. The scheme to go to Venice to disguise himself out of nothing; this Portia neither girl nor woman, but all between.

These extrovert performances (one might include also Brian Parr's desperate Launcelot Gobbo) draw attention to the enclosed nature of the set, which consequently becomes oppressive; but they don't make the use of that must have been intended. It is emphasized that an interior—only at Belmont for a few minutes does the sun filter in—and it requires, interior drama. Its mystery seeks fulfillment in performances whose mark is inwardness. The awkward young men, among whom Adam Bareham's Bassanio must unfortunately be counted, may relax as the production matures, and the energy of the group, which is that of youth, manifest itself in its unbridledness. Christopher Ravenscroft's Antonio is odd, unexpressive, perhaps in deliberate contrast with Shylock, but misguided if as, and presents more of a problem for the future. He is not helped by the remarkably silly book he wears with his otherwise sober dress. McDiarmid's Shylock is also a liability, since he seeks to suggest a deeper love for his daughter than Shakespeare's text will allow if the interpretation is really to work.

But the whole cast needs to feel more at home with the play. The conspicuously poetic passages fall flat for lack of any understanding of the link between their extravagance and the story's. And there are far too many false metaphors, starting with Antonio's "My ventures are not in one bottom trusted" as though some other part of the body were preferred. What sort of thing is wrong, to have another member of the company giving "patiently" in four syllables with exquisite care looks just like showing off.

The three caskets are poised above the actors' heads and outstage canilliers deliver them shakily to earth when required—a bad idea. The shakiness is symptomatic, but if the canilliers can get the right spirit in his young players, all may yet go well with this *Merchant*.

Embellished volumes

E. C. Fernie

English Romanesque Art 1066-1200  
Hayward Gallery, until July 8

This exhibition reveals the Romanesque as one of the great periods of European art, deserving as much recognition, attention and enjoyment as better-known ones such as the Gothic and the Baroque. The term "Romanesque" describes the style prevalent in Western Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, characterized neither by the late antique survival of the first millennium nor by the semi-naturalism of the later Gothic. It is rather a mixture of the sophisticated and the barbaric, a combination which makes it of peculiar relevance to the twentieth century. England at this time was no peripheral recipient of continental influences but one of the leading centres of artistic production, as the objects on display clearly demonstrate. All the crafts and most materials are represented: there are carvings in stone and ivory, manuscripts displayed for their illuminations and their script, book covers, metalwork, seals, lead fonts, window glass, ironwork, tiles and even a bell, a chest and some whole pots. Many of the pieces are unpublished and will be new even to the expert.

Romanesque art is architectural, both literally. In the sense that much of it forms part of a building or was used in conjunction with one, and metaphorically in the sense that its imagery partakes of the logically structural and volumetric qualities of its architecture. The exhibition acknowledges the importance of this context by means of a short and general but none the less effective tape-slide programme.

Double-crossing

Peter Kemp

R. L. STEVENSON  
The Master of Ballantrae  
HTV

*The Master of Ballantrae* has two narrators, two protagonists, and ends with a double funeral. Dualities, and a duel, are central to it. At its heart is the antipathy—and antithesis—between two brothers: Henry, responsible but lustreless; James, irresponsible and glamorous. Theirs is a sibling rivalry that's almost symbolic—out for nothing are they referred to as Jacob and Esau. Each embodies qualities antagonistic to the other. Where Henry is reliable, altruistic, modest, James is treacherous, selfish, swaggering. Henry's life is rooted in tradition, the estate, his family; James's rootless existence is given over to solitary wanderings—from the tropics to the frozen north. Even geographically, as this suggests, the novel makes great play with polarities: it was to be a story, Stevenson recorded in a piece about its genesis, "of the sea and the land, savagery and civilization".

Some did attempt to portray such dichotomies occasionally flickers into view in HTV's dramatization of the novel. But there is no inkling of the book's concern with dualities. Written three years after *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *The Master of Ballantrae* is similarly fascinated by the idea of the binary personality. Duplicitous features prominently: James is two-faced, uses double talk, and has been a double agent. But Stevenson is mainly interested in something more complex than mere dissimulation. What really intrigues him is the ambiguous amalgam of the human psyche. In this book, it's hard to be sure which labels to apply to behaviour. MacKellar, the chief narrator, remarks that "there are double words for everything; the word that swells, the word that belittles". More than this, there's a shot-silk flicker to motives and responses. Ambivalence, despite the vibrant clarity of Stevenson's prose, keeps hazarding the picture. Admirable traits are acknowledged—"there are dangerous virtues: virtues that tempt the encroacher"—cause ood brother's degeneration. Corruption keeps the other healthy. Characters find their emotions warming to what their morality deprecates—partly because lawlessness comes more elevated origins, a "Gypsy gentry" accompanied with an animal energy that

as well as by an excellent collection of prints and drawings illustrating the rediscovery of the Romanesque in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an inclusion which reminds one that the past is always seen through the veils of intervening ages, veils which both illuminate and distort.

The rich diversity of the subject of the exhibition raises in acute form the problem of how the material should be presented. The history of art is a Janus-faced discipline. On one hand it can treat the object of its study as a source of aesthetic delight requiring critical assessment, an *objet trouvé* for which the label "Romanesque" or "Quattrocento" has only a secondary relevance. On the other hand it can also consider the same object with an austere disinterest as part of the detritus of a culture which it is the scholar's task to reconstruct and explain. The Hayward adopts the first of these two approaches. The objects form a sumptuous display, laid out for our delectation like selected pieces on a jeweller's tray. They are imaginatively lit and elegantly disposed in sufficient space for them to stand in their own right or, by juxtaposition, to make a point of comparison.

Given the unfamiliarity of Romanesque art this choice was a sensible one, seducing the visitor into a foreign world through the delights of the eye. As a result, however, the pieces are not provided with a didactic context. It is true that a historical framework is supplied by the division of the material into the reigns of the Norman and Angevin kings and by the lucid panels of text which describe the salient events of each period. Yet there is little or no relationship between these divisions and the objects grouped into them. The presence of more

propriety tamely lacks. Ultimately, the "fraternal enemies" in some ways change places. The implacable vindictiveness that initially infused James's behaviour is absorbed by Henry. He's the one who finally lusts for revenge, and, on achieving it, is so flushed with fulfilment it's suspected he's taken a mistress—but "it was hatred and not love that gave him headful colours".

William Bast's television version ignores such Janus-faced aspects of the book, settling instead for bare-faced melodrama. Stereotyped distortion is imposed: most grossly in the work's conclusion where, instead of showing the brothers dying simultaneously, Bast—in a soft-hearted, and soft-headed, move—keeps Henry alive and restores him, still uncannily in the bloom of youth, to Ballantrae with his bonny bride. In keeping with the remorselessly sentimental approach, Henry hasn't taken to drink, nor James to spying; seen as almost literally distasteful in the book, James is reduced by the script and Michael York's flaccid performance to a flabbily cherubic rogue.

Even on the adventure-yarn level, Bast's version stays cosy and rosy. The episodes with the psychotic buccaner, Teach—full of sickening brutality in the novel—here seem like something from *The Pirates of Penzance*: matry joviality under the Jolly Roger, and Brian Blessed giving a hammy performance more suggestive of stomping the boards than shivering the timbers. Even the candle-lit duel, described by Stevenson with such tingling chill, turns into a clashing bore, full of Erroll Flynn like antics. Preposterous sequences are thrust into the story—such as James's lecherous wrestling with Henry's wife while emitting plastic dialogue: "A facade of ice... underneath it, a savage cat!"

Compounding the absurdity, most of the cast struggle with the Scottish accent as if trying to hold on to a tism of shanter in a gale. Ian Richardson gives an authentic-sounding—as well as powerful and subtle—performance as MacKellar. Elsewhere, brogues slip comically away or whisk completely from view. Though the wardrobe department has worked strenuously to pack the screen with a convincing-looking gallantry of Celts and kilts, the speech makes it clear that there's a Sassenach behind every sporran. While scotching everything of importance in the book, the adaptation could hardly seem less Hibernian.



A painted miniature from a psalter of 1180-90, included in the exhibition reviewed here and reproduced in its catalogue, edited by George Zarnecki, Janet Holt and Tristram Holland (416pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £19.95, paperback £10.95. 0 297 78433 1).

written, explanatory material would no doubt have altered the balance of the exhibition for the worse, but the provision of a physical context, even if only in outline, or by means of an accompanying photograph, would have enriched it. Certainly the Fownhope tympanum has been set as if over a doorway, the York voussains built into the form of an arch and the capitals all placed above eye level, but this is not enough.

The capitals from Reading and Winchester, for instance, could have been placed in short sections of simulated arcading, with no loss of accessibility. Instead they are set in two tiers one above the other, an arrangement which specifically denies their original location and function and which is particularly jarring given the architectural character of the style. Similar-

ly the various liturgical objects such as books, candlesticks, fens and censers could have been illustrated in use, perhaps with a reproduction from a contemporary source.

This shortcoming is a small price to pay for the major achievement of this exhibition, bringing together widely dispersed pieces of such high quality. Everyone will have their own favourites, but particular mention can be made of the two leaves of a gospel book from Avesnes, the Gloucester candlestick, the seal of Henry I, the fragment of a head from Winchester with a tiny figure caught in its hair, the Hyde Abbey capitals with their curious imagery and a delicate modelling worthy of ivory carving, and the splendid, almost baroque reconstruction of the lavabo from Much Wenlock.

Posturing to the populace

Katherine Duncan-Jones

SHAKESPEARE  
Coriolanus  
BBC2

Eliazh Moshinsky's sombre production of *Coriolanus* has in heightened form the faults and virtues of his *Cymbeline* (TLS, July 22, 1983). Often visually static, its strength lies in peaceful, pictorially composed interiors, such as the charming sequence in which Virgilia works at her tapestry frame and Volumina, in profile, stitches a white cloth. Several of the scenes in the Roman senate, with rugged-featured, black-suited figures marshalled along the length of a great wooden table, recall Van Dyck or even Holbein pictorially, while being redolent of C. P. Snow in atmosphere. The power game in its early stages comes alive through attentiveness and suspense, but fails ever to rise to real excitement. Frenetic theatricality is no substitute. In the scenes of military action atmosphere is wholly lacking. Smoke, elaborate helmets and murky slow motion shots of shields and battering rams fail to persuade us that we have seen Calus Martius flustering the Volscians in Coriol.

And after this ample display of Roman weaponry, it seems perverse of Coriolanus to fight virtually naked with his chief enemy Aufidius—especially given the stubborn *pudeur* which will prevent him from exposing his scarred body to the Roman populace. Perhaps we are meant to remember the naked wrestling scene in Ken Russell's *Women in Love*: certainly some sort of Lawrentian blood-brotherhood between Coriolanus and Aufidius seems to be indicated. But the relationship never comes fully alive, and swinging cuts in the last two scenes make Aufidius's revulsion against his former chum unprepared and unexplained.

Alan Howard is seriously miscast as Coriolanus. His extraordinarily affected diction could never be mistaken for military roughness, and his tedious, solipsistic posturings appear to test to their very limit the benign loyalty of Menenius (an admirable performance by Joss Ackland) and the stately maternal dedication of Volumina (a magnetic rendering by Irene Worth, but one which never seems to achieve any rapport with Howard's). The only scene in which Howard's manner really comes off is,

however, an important one. In 11.iii, his sneering plea for the citizens' "voices" has just the right lofty, annoying quality, and the confused reaction of the people (a lively mob, well led by Paul Jesson)—"his kind of speech; he did not speak us"—matches the viewers' difficulty in knowing what to make of him. Coriolanus' rare moments of magnanimity—an important element, I would have thought, in any interpretation—are either unnoticeable or merely grotesque. His grateful plea for the freedom of his Volscian host (1.1x) is wholly swallowed up in a hammy display of exhaustion, passing without impact; and his strangely florid greeting to Valeria, his wife's best friend:

The moon of Rome, chaste as the icicle:  
That's curbed by the frost from purest snow  
And hangs on Dian's temple! Dear Valeria,  
sounds so ridiculous in the context of the rest of the performance that it would have been better cut—except that Valeria herself (Heather Canning) has a dimension of reality that Coriolanus wholly lacks. All the womenfolk are excellent, Joanna McCallum making a stately yet touching Virgilia, as strong-willed in her quiet way as her husband and mother-in-law. The odious Tribunes (John Burgess and Anthony Pedley) are appropriately slippery and malign. Martial chants composed by Stephen Oliver at the beginning add end suggest excitement which the production as a whole fails to deliver.

STAND MAGAZINE

This... long since earned its right to recognition for its scrupulous standards of discrimination, its prompting of... English readers in the direction of important foreign work, and its contribution to a selection and re-definition of "the culture".  
New Corcoran, TLS February 24 1984

The Spring 1984 issue contains Gertrude Stein's little-known play "Innocence", translated by Michael Horowitz; poems by Thom Gunn, Philip Gross, Vonn Rutsen and others; fiction from Ireland, Holland and Japan; Terry Eagleton on Alan Smith; Peter Lewis on Australian fiction; poetry reviews by John Saunders and David McNeill.

Still available, the Winter 1983-84 issue has full results of our first International Short Story Competition, first prize £1,000, and the four winning stories. Coming later this year, details of the second Competition.

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Letters

near-infinity of facts at a shallow level of abstraction, while the French would master at a deeper level of abstraction a more restricted number of facts. In other words, a different emphasis is put by the English and the French on facts, on the one hand, and theories, on the other. For the former, no theory is better than a poor one, while for the latter, a poor theory is better than none at all.

These seem, indeed, to have been the guidelines of two quite separate cultural traditions over the past three or four centuries. In this respect Needham's reproach amounts to restating once again the very terms of the old *Pas-de-Calais* misunderstanding: for Needham a single fact can bring down a theory, for Lévi-Strauss a theory is valid until replaced by a better one. This is all reminiscent of current debates in the philosophy of science.

As far as results are concerned, it would be difficult indeed to decide which approach has been most successful over the years. The only inescapable observation is that the confrontation of the two views has led to frequent and fruitful cross-fertilization. The conclusion, if any, is undoubtedly Lévi-Straussian in its intention: the benefit for humanity does not

reside in one culture being right over the others, but in the maintenance of their diversity.  
PAUL JORJON  
FAO, PO Box 1369, Cotonou, Benin.

'Enderby's Dark Lady'

Sir, — Anthony Burgess's *Enderby* amused your reviewer (March 30) with the suggestion that Shakespeare left his mark in a cryptogram in Psalm 46. But more solemn heads than Enderby's have noticed the clues, and I wouldn't be surprised if Enderby had picked up the idea from *The Times* of April 24, 1976, where Bishop Mark Hodgson suggested that it was, in fact, a hidden tribute to the Bard on his forty-sixth birthday on the part of the translators of the Authorized Version.

The Psalms were translated, according to John Boys's list, by the Cambridge team whose first member was Mr Lively and last member Mr Bing. I don't wonder that Enderby identified T. D. ARMSTRONG  
33 Brookfield Road, London E9.

'The Gypsy Language'

Sir, — Since I wrote the review of Tatyana V. Ventzisl's *The Gypsy Language* (February 3) that annoyed Yanko Le Redzko so much (Letters, April 13), I felt I should contact the Gypsies to straighten the matter out. In his letter to the TLS, Mr Le Redzko assured us that the World Romani Congress had "permanently consultative status" at the UN, and accordingly, I called the UN in New York City (212-754-1234) to get in touch with the permanent representative of the Gypsies.

Inquiring for the World Romani Congress, I was informed by the UN operator that there should call the Non-Governmental Liaison Section (NGLS) at 212-754-3117. The NGLS told me that they also had no record of the permanent consultative status of the World Romani Congress. I was referred to the Non-Governmental Organizations Services again obtaining. I was referred to their appropriate Department of Public Information (DPI/NGLS) at 212-754-6163. I was told to call the section head's office (212-754-6849)

where I was directed to the Economic and Social Congress (ECOSOC) at 212-754-4840. I knew of no group by that name. They did, however, have data on a "Roman Union" and I could contact its representative, Mr Joseph Galapa, in Sparks, Nevada.

Now I have travelled through Sparks many times in the western Nevada desert, and I know that it is nowhere near New York City. Now the less I tried to reach Mr Galapa by phone only to discover that no such person exists in Sparks, Nevada.

But I still would like to straighten this matter out, and must now refer to Mr Le Redzko to ask how I might reach the permanent representative of the Gypsies.

JOHN A. C. OREPPIN  
Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio 44115

and abandoned world of *Chomsky* that... as any leader could claim, '68 was a... armies before falling back into the Breton... intrigues was...



# COMMENTARY

## The tender and the temerarious

Julian Budden

GIUSEPPE VERDI  
The Sicilian Vespers  
Coliseum

"Although somewhat lacking in vivid colour as a whole, this opera is admirable in its details; it has the most exquisite harmonic and rhythmic elegance, such as is not too frequently found in the great composer's other works . . . To enumerate all the charms and strengths of this solemn opera would take a long time, since we should have to dwell admiringly on each number." Thus the twenty-two-year-old Boito on *Giovanna de Guzman*, the censored Italian version of *Les Vêpres Siciliennes*, which, even after Italian unification, was slow to revert to its original locale (Boito actually preferred it in its transposed Portuguese setting). Ambivalent yet basically favourable, it is a judgment that most Verdians would uphold. Like the god who opens the Ballet of the Seasons (cut, together with the brass cabaletta of Act II, in this performance) *The Sicilian Vespers* faces both ways. It is experimental in that it shows Verdi grappling for the first time with certain problems of French prosody and taking advantage of the weak tonic accents of the language to evolve a style of melody markedly different in rhythmic character from that of *La traviata* or *Rigoletto*. Echoes of Auber and Meyerbeer sound through the composer's familiar voice, occasionally muting its impact, some would say. But there is nothing here of a patchwork. The style is consistent throughout, characterized by the smooth melodic contours, the abundance of martial movements and the ubiquitous "rat-a-tat" figure with its connotations of fatality.

At the same time *The Vespers* (1855) is a work of consolidation, in that it reverts to the historical fresco favoured by Verdi in the 1840s, with principals whose main function is to embody the causes for which they stand and who achieve individual humanity only in isolated scenes. Odabella, heroine of *Amia* (1846), passes from warrior maid to suffering, tender-hearted woman with unconvincing abruptness. But with Hélène — here Italianized as "Elena" — we see the transformation taking place before our eyes and ears, from the rousing call to arms in Act I to the agonized terzetto of Act V. The opera's slow, sometimes stiffly moving action slows the characters time to

reflect as well as feel; and reflection, in Verdi no less than in Wagner, means increased tonal and harmonic interest. Verdi's early tenors are not noticeably unsure of themselves. Henri (Arrigo in this production), torn between hope and fear, strikes a new note in his Act III "air" with its restless changes of mode and key. Likewise Montfort, sadly musig on the son who has been brought up to hate him, explores strange harmonic territory somewhat in Berlioz's manner. Only Dr Procula remains irredeemably two-dimensional: a stern, inflexible Ayatollah, who, alone among operatic revolutionaries, has no personal motive for his actions. Disinterested patriotism may be admirable, but it does not make for musical interest; and after launching him with one of the noblest, most beautiful arias in the bass repertoire ("Et toi, Palermo") Verdi can do nothing further for him.

Length and spectacle have tended to make *The Sicilian Vespers* a festival rather than a repertory piece (one remembers the 1951 production at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino with Maria Callas as the soprano lead and the inaugural performance of the rebuilt Teatro Regio in Turin in 1973 with the same singer in the less congenial role of producer). Mark Elder and his forces show complete faith in the opera's ability to attract a normal Coliseum audience. The musical organization is excellent, the pacing of the score wonderfully sure and every detail lovingly attended to. Josef Svoboda's set, which has already done duty in Hamburg and Paris, is starkly effective, with its broad, zig-zag staircase and fierce top-lighting, though more suitable, perhaps, to one of those cut-price versions "für die deutsche Bühnenbearbeiter" once so common in provincial Germany. Indeed, as I recollect, the Hamburg production, though sung in Italian, was of this order, being shortened and re-jigged, with the 1863 romance substituted for Henri's original air. In London, by ingenious staging, the final massacre comes off well, as does the thwarted assassination of Montfort in Act III. Not so the seizure of the brides in Act II. With nothing to suggest the sea nearby, the bridal dance might be a Hallows' 'en orgy on the Brocken for all that one can see of what is going on. The soldiers' action should be a concerted coup which takes the Sicilians completely by surprise. Here it is a messy affair lasting much longer than the score indicates — though doubtless the token resistance offered by the Sicilians would

have pleased the composer.

As Elena, Rosalind Plowright is outstanding from her opening aria (sung at its full, exacting length) to the light-hearted Sicilienne. In the ensembles her voice is gloriously dominant; and she projects the character in all its aspects, aided by looks and a stage presence that many an international star might envy. A slight fidgetiness in the duets will doubtless settle down in time. Neil Howlett gives a finely rounded performance of the first of Verdi's careworn rulers (Doge Foscari apart), who long for the affection and the domestic happiness permitted to ordinary mortals. Commanding a firm line and a rich grateful tone, he fills every phrase with significance; and every word is audible, no matter where he stands. Kenneth Collins's passionate Italianate tenor is not ideally suited to a role that often calls for restraint. Indeed he might almost have spared us his Act V Melodie with its floated top D, so completely is it outside his vocal *Fach*. But the moments of high emotion find him more than adequate. Richard Van Allan plays the conspiratorial doctor with great authority and vocal poise; but he should watch a tendency to shout his high notes sharp.

"I have the greatest sympathy for all the bad translations that are going round, since it's impossible to make a good one": Verdi's own words, referring to this very opera. The same thought is prompted by Edmund Tracey's on the whole very serviceable English version. The fact is that the recurring "rat-a-tat" figures always sound clumsy in any language but French. Then too it is the misfortune of all translations that while their felicities pass unnoted the jarring words remain in the mind. Granted that any solution is bound to be a compromise I wonder whether we have our priorities right. Is it so important to preserve the syllabic distribution of, say, "Téméraire!" when the result is the implausibly mild "You are headstrong!"? Something like "Foolhardy youth!" would sit just as well on the musical phrase while maintaining the exclamatory tone of the original. There is a tradition that the near-rhyme is valid in opera; but if the propriety is that between "disfigured" and "withered" it is best avoided altogether. So will the Coliseum have to bow to the now almost universal practice of *Originalsprache*? I obstinately hope for the advent of a modern Dent, with Dent's capacity for lateral thinking, to vindicate opera in English.

those minor mysteries which go to make up the rich tapestry of life in the world of film.

But introducing reality into fantasy is a risky business; and it seems to be the main reason why *Greystoke* goes into a flat spin soon after take-off and then crashes, killing practically all on board. The film tends almost towards documentary at times. Nature is red in tooth and claw, but not romantically so; strange foods — mainly grubs — are ingurgitated by apes; Tarzan and D'Arnot; the appearance of Tarzan's friends and relations is a triumph for costume and make-up, and they therefore naturally don't use human speech but mow and mow, gibber, hoot and mew realistically. Great for the dialogue coach; less than enthralling for the audience.

The film was, apparently, harshly cut before release. More spe footage could have littered the cutting-room floor without provoking outrage or protest. But it is true that the cuts make some scenes pointless and give the plot a quite extraordinary jerkiness. An immense build-up to a *Heart of Darkness*-like settlement peopled with sinister white, eccentrics, Tarzan's first contact with civilization, ends with so sudden an anticlimax as to cause bubbles of nitrogen to form in the blood. An English naturalist, Sir Evelyn Blount (John Wells) — a character wisely not used by Burroughs — disappears stage right pursued by natives, only to reappear without explanation half an hour later at Greystoke Castle, to welcome Tarzan home.

But the cuts might not be altogether bad, for whenever the film is given a chance to breathe, it invariably makes an ass of itself. Tarzan's eating habits in civilized life, like D'Arnot's in

the jungle, are the cause of much unsubtle merriment. Some feeble, simplistic, and — from the point of view of the period in which the film has been so carefully set — anachronistic gestures are made against colonialism, imperialism and big-game hunting, and for the cause of animal liberation.

The film ends with Tarzan, disgusted with civilization, abandoning a career in the House of Lords to return to his family in the jungle: *Greystoke 2* is doubtless being spliced together from the outtakes at this very moment. But even Burroughs knew — and showed in following books — that life doesn't go backwards; for a genuine way of viewing this conflict between environment and heredity there's no need to look further than the last *Mowgli* story.

For the record Tarzan — or John Clayton, as the film prefers to call him — is played by Christopher Lambert; Jane — who never gets a chance to swing from tree to tree — by Andie MacDowell. But the only participants to emerge with any real credit from the enterprise are those who sweated buckets inside a lot of hairy costumes; the cameramen who produced some amazing vistas of Cameroon and the south of Scotland; and, finally, the late Ralph Richardson, who against all odds makes Tarzan's grandfather, the Sixth Earl of Greystoke, a real, touching and memorable character.

*Charlie Chaplin: A Bio-Bibliography* by Wes D. Gehring (227pp. Greenwood; distributed in the United Kingdom and Europe by Eyre & Spottiswoode, 0 313 23288 1) centres on a long essay assessing published research material and collections open to students.

## Redolence

Andrew Motion

Bill Brandt: Literary Britain  
Victoria and Albert Museum, until May 20

The Victoria and Albert Museum planned *Literary Britain* as an eightieth birthday tribute to Bill Brandt. But eleven weeks before its opening, he died. Not surprisingly, therefore, the show has a distinctly elegiac feel — one which might seem (to risk sounding cold-hearted) to be distracting, or at least distorting. In fact the reverse is true: the memory of Brandt's death emphasizes many of the themes he sought to express in the photographs. A substantial number were originally commissioned by the magazine *Lilliput* and taken between 1943 and 1948; then Brandt added to them and organized them into a sequence of one hundred which was published by Cassell in 1950. The book was introduced by John Hayward, who chose appropriate quotations to accompany each print. They reflect — indeed, they can hardly help reflecting — the threat of the war years, the austerity of the late 1940s, and the celebration of survival summarized by the Festival of Britain. It is the photographs' gloom, and their simultaneous reminder of art's capacity to survive (and to outlive its creators) which are reinforced by the fact that the show is posthumous.

But the dates are important for more than these reasons. In the 1950s, Brandt abandoned printing methods which were designed to produce medium tones and meticulous precision, and instead concentrated on bold chiaroscuro patterns and simplified — sometimes almost abstract — shapes. The prints on display in this exhibition are all "vintage" — that is, made at the same time as the original negatives. Although this means putting up with a few bumps and scratches, it also allows us to appreciate Brandt's original intentions. What we can see — particularly since the organizers have not ironed out the chronology but stuck to the alphabetical order of subject used in the Cassells book — is an evocative interplay between Brandt's established early technique, and his emerging later one. In the first picture, for instance, Jane Austen's Chawton is immaculately detailed: the bricks distinctly pointed and the cleaned shovels hanging in a yew tree; in the second picture, Burslem Town Hall (from Bennett's *Clayhanger*) squats as a single gigantic black slab in its deserted square.

This kind of modulation is profoundly evocative of the period in which the images were taken: it is impossible not to be reminded of the black-out, and of a suppressed longing for light, space and mobility. This ambivalence refracts the larger dichotomy inherent in the very title of the series — the townscapes and landscapes of literary Britain contribute crucially to the living national self-awareness, but they are themselves discreet forms of mausolea: the Brontës' moors, Wordsworth's lakes and Dr Johnson's Skye all epitomize the present by being redolent of the past. They liberate us because they remind us of greatness, but in Brandt's pictures they also circumscribe us with their fixed, inflexible and often massive forms.

It is, in fact, the series' most subtle calculation (and Brandt's "indebtedness to happy chance", as Sir Tom Hopkinson says in the catalogue, "must be the smallest of any great photographer") to dwell so repeatedly on subjects that advertise themselves as being monumental: Stonehenge (for Hardy); the Roman wall (for Kipling); Salisbury Cathedral (for Trollope). Their unmissable mixture of resilience and looming darkness has the effect of attaching a similar combination to slighter edifices — Blake's heavily-tinted, black-and-white cottage — and to the very few individuals who appear in the pictures: the fisherman on the beach at Aldeburgh could almost be a standing stone. The past we should cherish cannot easily be removed from our consciousness, these pictures want us to understand, but equally, none of it is entirely safe. Brandt's handling of this theme is extraordinarily elegant, not only because of this single-mindedness with which he pursues it, but also because of the variety of forms he allows it to take.

## In the service of the Crown

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112pp. BBC. £4.75 (paperback, £2.50).  
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One of the many merits of the celebrated television series *Yes, Minister* was the fact that it was a caricature and that, like all good caricatures, it was sufficiently close to the reality to be instantly recognizable but also sufficiently exaggerated to constitute light-hearted, and highly enjoyable, buffoonery. It is impossible that a serious attempt to reveal the real nature of the relationship between ministers and civil servants should be as much fun. But is it any nearer the truth?

In the series of radio talks published as *No, Minister* (in 1982) and *But, Chancellor* (in 1984), Hugo Young and Anne Sloman have made a valiant attempt to persuade the mandarins, and their political Emperors, to come really clean. They have done so by inviting them to consider the stock questions: Is the civil service too powerful; too large; too incompetent; too unaccountable? And they have elicited answers which are intriguingly, but predictably, diverse.

Take, as an example, the question of competence. Those who survey Whitehall from outside, the short-term political advisers and efficiency experts whom all governments recruit from time to time, tend, naturally enough, to fasten on the lack of those incentives to administrative excellence which the commercial world is alleged to provide; and they criticize the civil service, not unreasonably by their own standards, for its failure to ensure scope for dynamic leadership, to reward outstanding ability by accelerated promotion, and to develop the kind of managerial competence which is required at the higher levels of industry. It is significant, however, that one of the clearest and firmest rebuttals of such views should come from a minister. Mr Denis Healey has no doubt that "the average level of competence in the civil service is much higher than in other walks of life and perhaps higher than is required in the civil service, given the weaknesses in other areas of British life".

Here is a very interesting reflection, which Young and Sloman might well have explored more deeply. There may, indeed, be too many capable civil servants; some of whom would be better employed in industry or commerce or other wealth-generating occupations. Why, then, do they not migrate to these more challenging areas of employment? The fact that these areas tend to be also more remunerative suggests that the motivation which attracts recruits to the civil service is not the search for profit, which the businessman regards as the mainspring of action (and is apt, mistakenly, to transfer to Whitehall as the criterion of performance), but something which both ministers and civil servants regard as more interesting and more compelling: the exercise of power in the service of the well-being and good order of the realm, however indefinable that concept may be.

But, although ministers and civil servants share a common motivation, they are less unanimous about which of them has, or should have, the lion's share. The Treasury is usually regarded as the most powerful of all Whitehall departments; and Sir Peter Middleton, currently its permanent secretary, takes a robust view about the way in which it should use its muscle. "The ideal arrangement for the Treasury would be one in which everybody was free to take their own decisions — and we told them which decisions to take." In the context of the remark the "we" clearly includes ministers as well as officials. But Mr Tony Benn is more sceptical about the reality of the matter. Discussing his department's negotiations with the Treasury about the reduction in its expenditure, he observes, "To begin with, you'd think

It was a real battle; but actually the thing has been pre-fixed by officials to some extent" — with the result, of course, that it is the projects dear to the minister but unwelcome to his official which suffer. He is outspoken about the departmental Treasury having its own policy — "I suppose you could argue that the economic failure of Britain since the war could be attributed to the Treasury because they've always been in power." And he is no less distrustful of that other great centre of alleged power, the Foreign Office, especially in relation to the European Community. "I think the FO in a deep way has transferred its allegiance from Britain to Brussels . . . the FO influence in Whitehall is now quite pernicious." To which we find Mr Roy Hattersley replying that "Even Mr Benn, I think, if he was Foreign Secretary, would like the idea of being able to interfere in everybody else's business, thanks to the EEC". Mr Healey has even less doubt where the real power lies — "I think that a minister who complains that his civil servants are too powerful is either a weak minister or an incompetent one." And Mr Michael Heseltine seems to clench the point with the statement that "The Benn picture is, of course, one of the classic rationalisations of personal failure. The reason why Benn achieved nothing is because Wilson was determined he was going to achieve nothing

. . . It was the triumph of the political will of the majority of the Labour government that hemmed Benn in; and, of course, Benn now tries to blame the civil servants. It's got nothing to do with civil servants." Nothing? Nothing at all?

The contrasting attitudes of the politicians, even within the same nominal party, indicate a point which the producers of the radio programmes might have done more to illuminate — the difference between the minister in his capacity as head of his department, publicly responsible for the efficient and impartial discharge of its functions, and the minister as a practising politician, threading his way warily through the minefields of party conflict, whether sown by his opponents or by his own colleagues. A civil servant, traditionally neutral in the party sense, is acutely aware of the need to distinguish between the individual dealing with departmental business at his ministerial desk in Whitehall in the morning and the same individual calculating the odds in the corridors of Westminster in the afternoon. The former is a familiar figure, a colleague in the definition and execution of policy, often becoming a friend whose intimacy transcends, and will outlast, his tenure of office; the latter is a different animal altogether, at large and predatory in a dangerous jungle. There is a

great gulf between these two manifestations of the one person, a gulf which the civil servant knows that he must negotiate with care and circumspection. Normally, he succeeds in doing so without either perpetrating or suffering much damage. But his ability to keep his footing across this delicate tightrope is not the least part of his real power; and it would have been both interesting and profitable to hear rather more about the means by which he learns how to maintain this fine distinction between loyalty and identification.

Sir Douglas Wass, in his Reith Lecture entitled "The privileged adviser", faces the point very honestly. He admits that there is one aspect of the relationship between civil servants and their political chiefs which has always worried him — "can it become too cosy, too intimate from the point of view of efficiency?" As he rightly says, a minister's job is a lonely one; and a senior official, whose judgment the minister has learned to respect, comes to play a bigger part in policy formulation than any of the minister's political colleagues. He does so largely because "he has no political ambitions and has a deep personal commitment to the success of his chief". Note the words "personal" and "success"; and consider the ambiguity which they entail. Sir Douglas can find no better way of resolving that ambiguity than by

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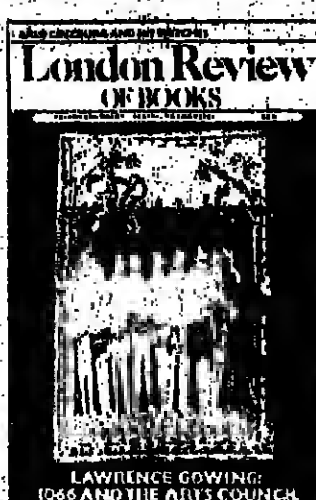
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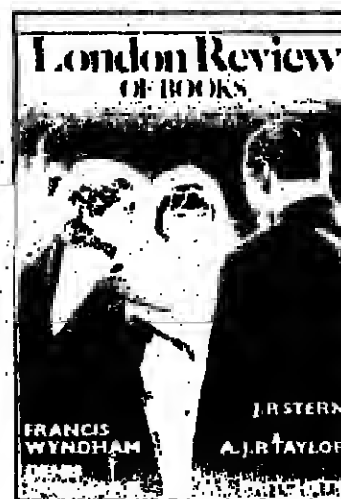
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using the word "trust". Perhaps there is no better way?

The point is relevant in relation to the argument about the accountability, or non-accountability, of civil servants. The programme on this subject in *No, Minister* is, in some ways, the least satisfactory in the series, a fact implicitly recognized by the producers themselves when they observe that, of all the questions which they asked, this was the one which was answered most clearly by the civil servants. "Mostly they are not, and feel that they should not be, accountable to anyone except their minister." A sound, conventional, reply. But it is a pity that the programmes did not attempt to examine it in greater depth or to expose some of the implications, and possible consequences, of a more radical approach to the problem of open government. There must be something of real substance in the doctrine of official secrecy if both ministers (as soon as they achieve office) and civil servants subscribe to it with such conviction; and there must be something more than mere embarrassment which would be liable to result if the doctrine were compromised. But what is it? Or, more relevantly, what do civil servants think that it is?

Sir Douglas confronts these issues in two of the most interesting of his lectures, "Critical Opposition - part of the polity" and "Opening up government". He confesses that he had initial doubts about the innovation which created Parliamentary Select Committees to watch over the activities of individual departments, partly "because we expected the committees to delve into matters which for apparently good reasons had been kept confidential"; but also, more significantly, "because we were apprehensive that officials under public examination would become politically exposed". In the event he can say that his fears on both scores were largely groundless. Indeed, he is able to list several results of the new system which he regards as positively beneficial. But the reasons for his reassurance - although he himself might not regard them as such - are implicit in his criticism of the committees as being superficial in their examination of witnesses; as insufficiently committed to their task to give it the necessary time and attention; and, above all, as decisively handicapped from the outset by a party system which necessarily implies that, on any issue of real importance, the need for impartial and objective inquiry will always have to yield priority to the overriding requirements of the Whips. He is driven to conclude, like others before him, that there are limits to what select committees can be expected to achieve and that the only place where a government can be seriously challenged on a major question of policy is the floor of the House of Commons. But there it is ministers, not civil servants, who are called to account; and it is accordingly ministers, not civil servants, who determine the extent to which official secrecy may be relaxed.

Sir Douglas is concerned, rightly, that the challenge at that level of responsibility should be more effective than it appears to be in the select committees. He proposes that the official Opposition (only one?) should be given additional support, in the form of more staff and more information; and, while realizing the difficulties, both constitutional and practical, which are entailed by the concept of a department of the Opposition, he would nevertheless like to see a limited experiment whereby civil servants would be seconded for not more than five years to provide the Opposition with the professional help which it needs "on the firm understanding that they would then be returned to the civil service and given a purely managerial post away from the political stage". The proviso is important - and inhibiting. I do not see a great rush of volunteers to serve an Opposition on this basis. I would rather expect civil servants to back away from the risk of compromising both their political neutrality and their subsequent careers. But I could well be wrong; and it is perhaps a pity that there seems little prospect that either of the major political parties, if in power, will embrace Sir Douglas's proposal in the foreseeable future.

Much the same, I fear, may prove to be true of his plea for a more generous release of official information to the public, no less than to the Opposition. He argues persuasively in favour of a more informed public opinion, not

least as the most effective and wholesome safeguard against the manipulation of information to which he regards both governments and the media as being prone. But he has to admit that all British governments have so far resisted a Freedom of Information Act. And, if one asks why they have done so, Sir Douglas's reply attributes the blame, correctly, to ministers rather than officials. But when he infers that "it may now be unwise to leave entirely to ministerial discretion decisions about publishing information which would otherwise be available only to government" and suggests that it might be desirable to establish some form of independent audit of the process of release which would prevent ministers being judges in their own cause, even he develops misgivings. He concludes that he cannot recommend the idea without reservation; but he believes that it merits serious study. Perhaps it does; but I suspect that it is unlikely to get it, for reasons which Sir Douglas himself recognizes - not least the fact that "ministers are far more apprehensive than their official advisers about the threat to policy that the publication of damaging or unsupportive material can pose".

It is this apprehension that lies at the root of

## Extending a helping hand

Jeremy Hardie

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"Looking at the whole record of Government's involvement in industry, the conclusion to which one has to come is that it would be better if they did not intervene at all." Not a surprising conclusion from a Conservative, who stood at the Bermondsey by-election, and is now a close adviser of Mrs Thatcher at 10 Downing Street. And the catalogue of disasters which John Redwood relates - from British Shipbuilders to De Lorean to British Rail - would make anyone despondent, whatever his political persuasion. His case studies of government intervention in industry, mostly taken from the 1970s, recall an era of muddled accountability, false optimism, and terror in the face of change which nobody would want to bring back. Some of the stories - such as the De Lorean venture in Northern Ireland - are almost incredible, and read more like products of Tom Sharpe than the Industry Act of 1972. And was it really true that in 1977 a British prime minister proudly announced a deal of £130m to sell ships to Poland, which required a government subsidy of £28m; a further price out of £15m was financed by a Eurobond loan to the Poles which had to be guaranteed by the British Government; all to allow Eastern Europe to undercut British shipping rates?

And yet, surely there must be some middle ground between lunacies such as these, and total abstinence. Mr Redwood very fairly records the successes of government intervention - the creation of GEC by the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation, a body of which he otherwise disapproves; the successful rescue of ICL and Ferranti, both of which with government help became efficient and profitable again. His excellent and stimulating book would have been even better had he had the time and space to deal more explicitly with how the private sector manages industrial change. The example of the textile industry, he implies, shows how good management in, for example, Courtauld can sort out the same problems more quickly and in the end with less harm than the drawn-out agonies which politicians and civil servants have imposed on industries like British Steel.

But making that argument good requires more analysis than this book provides. One of the attractions of a policy of "hands off industry" is that the failures which will always occur in business get hidden in the private bureaucracy of large companies, and cause much less national breast-beating than had the government made the same mistake. For every disaster in the public sector, the private sector can provide a similar horror story - often, as in the

reluctance of any government to consent to a more indiscriminate release of information. And it is here, surely, that we may suspect that we reach the nub of the matter. Civil servants operate within a political framework, the framework of an adversary system of government, in which power and authority are politically concentrated rather than shared. Their relationship with it tends, accordingly, to be a love-hate affair. In so far as they love it, they do so because, at its best, it enables them to know where they stand, where their duty lies, and to whom, and for what, they are responsible. Also, it makes for firm and effective administration and so reinforces their proper pride in their profession. In so far as they hate it, they do so because, at its worst, it is liable to degenerate into the kind of strident extremism which is the negation of that quality of reasoned, balanced, judgment which they regard as their principal qualification to contribute to the government of the realm. They are temperamentally disposed to favour consensus; but they also have a strong predilection for unsentimental efficiency. And I suspect that, if compelled to choose, the majority would incline towards the latter, if only be-

cause a parliamentary democracy on the British model has its own inbuilt safeguards against the overbearing efficiency which threatens to become a kind of totalitarianism, whether of the Right or of the Left, whereas it provides no corresponding insurance against the individually debilitating consequences of weak and vacillating direction.

At the same time civil servants are well aware that, in a free society, even the most efficient government depends, in the last resort, on the consent of the governed and that the power of even the most adversarial regime is comprised, and constrained, by the ultimate equality of the Crown, to which all its subjects owe equal and indifferent allegiance. Civil servants know that they are the servants not of any political party but of the Crown; and their duty to transfer their loyalty from one set of ministers to their successors without stress, embarrassment or loss of trust derives from the simple, but sufficient, conviction that the Queen's government must be carried on. These collections of broadcasts are timely reminders of some of the implications of the constitutional safeguard - and some of the risks of tampering with it ill-advisedly.

France and Japan (and the US - consider the position of major aerospace contractors) of businesses owned by, or very closely linked with, the State, which will operate very well, because the politicians do not complicate their lives with multiple and incompatible objectives - make money and preserve employment and be in the forefront of technology and provide service to the public - which no manager can handle.

At the beginning of *Going For Broke*, one imagines that the villain will be the politicians at the end it turns out to be the Department of Industry. The characteristic vice of the politician is to worry about employment; hence Mr Callaghan's devotion to the Polish ships deal, and Mrs Thatcher's sudden announcement of support for INMOS, which would create 2,000 jobs in Wales. The Department likes employment too, but has some special weaknesses of its own. It "seemed to regard perseverance as a sign of machismo" - perhaps because there is no mechanism in the public sector, given the childish conventions of debate in the House of Commons, for dealing charitably with honest mistakes. Punishment through the media and publicity is often much more severe. If and when it comes, for ministerial failure than it is in the private sector, for all industrialists' gung-ho talk about the bottom line and accountability.

Whatever Redwood says, governments will go on intervening, and should do so, despite the weaknesses which he rightly identifies as endemic. The industrial backwardness of Britain is partly (if only partly) the result of weaknesses which the US and Japan lack, and which government, despite its inevitable mistakes, can hope to ameliorate. First, Mr Redwood's expert and excellent discussion of the provision of venture capital and for all the huge improvements which have taken place in the past ten years, British financial institutions are still leagues behind the Americans in their willingness to provide very large sums for very uncertain and distant prospects of profit. Private capital should be able to do this; but it does not; the government is a better alternative. More important, there are very few companies in Britain willing or able to think a decade or more ahead, in a general and imaginative way, about what are the industries of the future. The Japanese, through MITI and otherwise, do so routinely. Such grand ideas are alien to the so-called pragmatism of the British; but they pay off in the end, if not necessarily in immediate profit or sales. In any case, the government is involved, not as a passive player, but because major changes in industrial structure require changing not only companies, but training, taxation, policy, education, law, public R & D and a wide variety of policies which are dominated by the government. We have certainly learned a great deal since the 1970s; but the lesson is not, as Mr Redwood quite the self-denial which Mr Redwood advocates.

## Naturalized faith

P. J. Marshall

STEPHEN NEILL  
A History of Christianity in India: The  
Beginnings to AD 1707  
583pp. Cambridge University Press. £45.  
0 521 24351 3

This book represents the learning of a lifetime. It includes thirty-five pages of appendices exploring at length issues raised in the text. Notes - which one would have hoped to find at the foot of the page, in a book of this price - occupy a further eighty-six pages. Finally, there are fifty-five pages of select bibliographies, which reveal the author's acquaintance with a huge range of material in many languages. The book is, however, a monument to more than Stephen Neill's learning; it grows with insights and sympathies nurtured by years of service in India. These are the more unmistakable for the restraint with which they are expressed. "My missionary parents... carried me off to India in 1901. Since that time India has been at the very heart of my concerns and affections." At several points the voice of personal experience can be heard, as in the account of Nobili trying to master "the Tamil language, that shoreless sea, and also all the complicated details of police, manner and conduct, in which the European, if he does not fully understand them, is certain to give offence". Concern and affection are the tones of the book. Fairness and generosity are shown to individuals and to points of view, Christian (often in bitter contention with one another) and non-Christian alike.

The book opens with a careful assessment of the origins and growth of the ancient Christian communities of southern India, ending in the measured judgment: "For the first three centuries of the Christian era we have nothing that could be called clear historical evidence.... It is possible that in this dark period the apostle Thomas came to India and that the foundation of the Indian church goes back to him; we can only regret the absence of any sure historical evidence to support this view." In the absence of material about early Christianity in India, the major part of the book has loyally to be concerned with developments after the first

arrival of the Portuguese in 1498.

Historians have traditionally seen the taking of Latin Christianity to India by the Portuguese as an integral part of the expansion of European power in the early modern period. This power had commercial, military, political and ideological dimensions. Thus merchants, soldiers, administrators and priests all combined to further Western interests and to challenge "traditional" India on a wide front.

Much of Bishop Neill's book can be read in this way and there are good reasons why such an approach should still command attention. Many Portuguese, especially those who directed the *Estado da India* from home, undoubtedly saw themselves as entirely distinct, ethnically, culturally and religiously, from the peoples of Asia and therefore as the standard-bearers of Christian civilization. Men still at least talked of crusades. When the Portuguese did win political power, as in Goa, it was natural for them to attempt to Christianize the population. Thus Neill has inevitably to relate how the Portuguese brought about at least a partial "spiritual conquest" (to use their own phrase) in certain areas of India. He describes how the *Padroado*, which gave the Portuguese monarchy responsibility for creating religious establishments in the East in return for being able to exercise "almost unlimited powers over them" as papal vicars, came into being. Priests went on da Gama's ships. Churches were quickly established. Religious orders soon followed the secular clergy, the Franciscans being most active at first, but the Jesuits eventually establishing themselves as the missionary heroes of the East. Dioceses were demarcated. Goa was the seat of colleges and later of the Inquisition. Its Hindu and Muslim inhabitants were cajoled, and sometimes more than cajoled, towards Christianity. The Paravas on the Fishar Coast became enthusiastic Christians. The Thomas Christian community was, at least in name, induced to accept orthodoxy as defined by the Portuguese. The missions reached out to the Coromandel Coast, to Bengal and, in pursuit of the great prize of all, laid unavailing spiritual siege to the court of the Mughal emperors.

From one perspective, these activities can be

seen as part of a Western and pre-eminently Portuguese offensive against India. This offensive had its victories, its defeats, and inevitably ended in many compromises. Most historians, especially before 1947, treated the spread of Christianity in India in this way, as part of the history of "the rise of the West", and they celebrated the victories or the defeats, usually according to where their sympathies lay in the modern world.

There is, however, another perspective, from which East and West, modern or traditional, victory or defeat, are not so easy to distinguish. Those who look from this perspective are less concerned with great entities like Europe and Asia or even Christianity and Hinduism, concentrating instead on the particular context in which contact took place. For southern and western India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they have described a world of vigorous inland and seaborne trade, of fragmented political authority and of a religious life more effectively understood in terms of the diverse local cults of particular groups than of the tenets of supposedly classical Hinduism.

The trend among recent historians is to stress that the Portuguese came into this world not as conquerors bringing with them a qualitatively different civilization, but as another element in an already complex mosaic. As participants rather than conquerors, they had services to render and benefits to receive. They were welcomed as allies by some, but they needed allies in return. There is by now a considerable body of writing analysing the political and commercial role of the Portuguese in these terms.

Neill's book helps us to approach the religious activities of the Portuguese in the same spirit. From the very outset he insists that Christianity in India should not be studied as an alien import. It has become part of the fabric of India, either because of its ancient roots there or because "willy-nilly the Indian faiths and the Christian faith were influenced and modified by one another". Influence and modification seem to be much more apposite than spiritual conquest as concepts to describe the growth of Christianity after 1498. To

desist from looking for a Thinker or a final "resting-place" for thought such as "Being" or "Soul" or anything else. His claim is not unwarranted. Buddhism is no "ism", as it sets out to replace all isms. But once it has replaced them how long can it remain without being itself yet another ism? (We are reminded of a similar charge made against Marxism, but perhaps this is not a fruitful line of inquiry in this context.)

The book is primarily concerned with the study of thought and *dharma* in the early Abhidharma text, the *Dhammasangani*. A *dharma* (interpreted as a "state of consciousness") is treated here "phenomenologically". Abhidharma is called a "meta-psychology". More specifically the author deals with the relatedness of the three important Abhidharma concepts: *saiva*, "sentient being"; *citta*, "thought"; and *dharma*, "states of consciousness". Essay Two discusses the concept of sentient being in early canons. Then the "mentalistic" vocabulary of "thought" and "mind" (*manas*) is introduced (Essay Three) so as to examine the topic of "rise of thought" (*cittapada*) against the backdrop of a "deobjectified" and "depsychologized" thinker (Essay Four). The extreme complexity of the Dhammasangani scheme for describing (deconstructing?) "thought" is reflected in the numerous tables and charts that cover sixty odd pages of this short book (Essay Five). Essay Six deals with the central theme of early Buddhist scholarship, the *dharma* theory. Some modern interpretations of *dharma* are given only to show the author's disagreement with them. He argues that early Abhidharma distinguished itself from all other sorts of "reductionist" psychology by consciously choosing a meta-psychological approach to mind.

Platigorsky has spared no pains to show that the early Theravadin was interested in psychologizing *dharma*. Modern Theravadin monks and scholars rightly reject the ontology of the early Buddhists by identifying it with

ing trend, despite the fact that historically *dharma* were given *naturalistic* (hence ontological) explanation in the later Abhidharma literature. The acceptable point in all this seems to be that the ontological question in our "Realism/Nominalism", "Materialism/Idealism" and "Dualism/Monism" dichotomies (where the enigmatic predicate of "being" is said to be true or false of things and events) is entirely irrelevant to our consideration of such early Buddhist statements as "there are *dhammas* alone". The "rise of thought" is, however, the primarily given fact in Abhidharma and each thought is interpreted in terms of infinite numbers of *dhammas* of one or several kinds. Lastly, the explicit thesis that no thinking can be discovered by our reflection on thinking, appears naturally very complicated in Abhidharma in view of its most emphatic denial of any resting-place for thinking, in the most articulate avowal of "no-thinker" psychology. To put it simply, avoiding the clumsy style of Platigorsky, we cannot "catch" thinking in (our reflection on) thinking, for indeed it turns into a reflection (in the mirror of thinking). But that one mirror, thinking itself, cannot be mirrored.

The third volume to be published in the useful Oxford Bible Series is *The Origins of Christianity: a historical introduction to the New Testament*, by Schuyler Brown (169pp., Oxford University Press, Paperback £3.95, 0 19 826202 7). Designed as a first book for students, it deals with such matters as the historical problems involved in the study of the New Testament and modern techniques for solving them, the questions that arise in connection with the work of Jesus, and the way the New Testament may be used in coming to a knowledge of the development of the Church and its faith in the first two or three generations.

J. L. H.

understand where Christianity took root and how it grew requires a very careful study of the contemporary Indian world. It is not to detract from the reputation of such legendary missionary heroes as Francis Xavier to show (as Neill does) that Christianity was offered to the Paravas at the precise moment when they needed Portuguese protection for secular reasons, or to demonstrate that they have constructed a Christian community with a very marked resemblance to a Hindu caste. The relations of the Thomas Christians and the Portuguese were deeply influenced by political and economic conditions on the coast of Kerala; and Neill sensitively depicts the way the Thomas Christians preserved their often apparently Hinduized traditions from Portuguese reforming orthodoxy. Accommodation as well as persecution often seems to have characterized relations between the clergy and the brahmins of Goa. The exploration of such themes is being taken further in recent work, such as that of Robert Frykenberg and Susan Kaufmann. Stephen Neill essentially agrees with them. It is imperative, he tells us, to see Indian Christianity "at all times against the Indian background, and to interpret its history as that of an endless dialogue with the other forms of religious faith by which it has been surrounded".



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John M. Sutcliffe



# Grinning and shuffling

## Valentine Cunningham

GLYNHUGHES  
The Hawthorn Goddess  
232pp. Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press.  
£8.95.  
0701128186

Glyn Hughes's first novel, *Where I Used to Play on the Green*, struck it rich in eighteenth-century Yorkshire. With an essay command of his material Hughes knocked together an appealingly fruity mixture of dark perversities and unspeakable passions, gruesome religious practices and early industrial cruelties—all true native grit, rebarbative landscape and consonantly uncouth dialect. It was a fine wallow in nasty provincial exoticism. Now, on the unguarded principle that second helpings can't be had, Hughes's second novel has dipped its esgier bucket into the same sludge of murks. Alas, this second helping takes a lot more digesting than the first.

Events centre on Aone Wyld, a girl who doesn't fit, an answerer-back, too conspicuous by half in her village for her own comfort and good. Her stone-mason father has taught her to read and to ask impertinent questions. Old male suspicions of the freemasonry of women, of that secretive magic of the menstruating, readily settle on her. Something of a pagan free spirit, a hawthorn goddess no less, she's labeled a witch and the progeny of the devil. Her mystiques slot easily into the dark places of the local psyche, otherwise inhabited by furtive yearnings to reestablish the topography of magic that the Christian church has built over. So they fantasize about her, chuck stones at her, push her around, drive her out, rape her. The novel sets Anne up, as the emblem of all the troubles of women and of nature (even, in some of its moods, of men as well) in a time of the tyrannically greedy enclosure of the fields and commons, of the swiftly encircling glooms of the Methodist revival, and the new coupling

up of formerly free workers in the mills of the mechanizing and centralizing weaving industry.

It's scarcely surprising that this girl and women (the novel sticks around her for most of her life) should buckle under the strain of all this historico-mythico-feminist significance. Nor is it all that unexpected that the novel's proliferating designs on social and political inclusiveness should break down, as they do, into a jumpily episodic botch-potch. Memorable moments occur, of course, and in some number. The arresting scene, the startling *opercu*, were, one recalls, Hughes's forte before. And here lots of things do stick: Anne being raped by a posse of roistering mummies in apocalyptic guise as wild animals; or the poet Greaves watching menstrual cloths being washed to a darkening upland stream which then flows "enriched" downhill "to feed the weavers' storied lands in the lower part of the valley"; or the group of destitute women invading a slaughterhouse for blood for their black puddings. However, too many of Hughes's sentences come with overwriting stamped on every feature: "Ann had not guessed what deep oceans of feeling were brewing their hidden storms under the frozen crusts of most people's characters." And that kind of verbal excess soon comes to seem the apt mirror of the plot's own rampant excesses.

Hughes has, for instance, a technique for suggesting scenic density that is uncomfortably like Ealing Studio's striving for verisimilitude on a cardboard street. We pan past the vicar in his schoolroom, the school dance outside it, a fiddler at an illicit beer-house, some weavers stretching cloth, some women rolling bay, some more weavers this time "grinning", some farmers "shuffling". And it's just like that succession of breadmen, milkman, postmen, policemen, coalmen and their various drays and bicycles that get wheeled in front of the cameras in an effort to warm up a studio set into some semblance of busy street life. And if Ealing is bad enough, worse is the way that so

much of this novel's zest for blood and horror by day and by night, in manacring rural byways or, in churchyards, seems close to the direr scenarios of Hammer Horror.

What's wrong, in fact, is not just a too exuberant zest for gothic leading this novel into repeated overacting—though there is that—but a contentment with the mere stereotypes of fiction and history. Not much in this novel rings very true. No character is seen for long from the inside. Nobody is any more real than the E. P. Thompsonian cardboard pop-up million-

ers and masturbatory Methodists or the hammer village loonies and sinister clerics and by off-stage powers of darkness. Hughes is wasting his substance. His first novel and part of this one show that he can write with a marvellous attentiveness to the shapes, smells and colours of the physical world and tell a story fired by admirable provincial chauvinism and fine historical indignation. All that is being squandered here. Let's hope the next two parts of the promised Ann Wyld trilogy have a more verbal and formal self-control.

## Arthur Fry

The best come out of the worst houses  
Or so it seems, although it is not so,  
But the explosive fires of Berkeley Street  
Concealed spirits greater than any I knew.

To be drunk on Saturday night, to bawl  
Was an exception to a better rule.  
I think so too and so thought Mrs Fry,  
Careful and grey and living next door.

The other Mrs Fry—at two doors up  
And no relation, as was pointed out—  
Was a balloon that sailed past the door  
Each day at lunch-time for her pint of beer

Which she bore fervently in a jug  
—Mild, probably—to have with her lunch:  
So reckless were some of the lower orders.  
And this Mrs Fry had a son,

Perhaps a grandson, now I think of it,  
But it was she was the enlivening presence  
With a clout for the children, or a voice  
Calling and calling till they came back home.

Arthur was this hero: four years old, and fat  
He could be seen grovelling on the road  
And shouting 'I be dead' as one alive  
Until collected with the horse manure

Carefully watched for when the baker came,  
Or milkman: Mrs Fry, with spoon and bucket,  
Took it up thoughtfully and puffed back home  
Though what she did with it I never knew.

Arthur grew bigger still: a footballer  
Instead of just a football, with a voice  
Still noticeable. It is no wonder then  
That when the war came, Arthur was reported

To be a sergeant up at Horfield Barracks,  
Giving the recruits bell, so far as noise  
Could penetrate their often wily minds  
As well as tell the left foot from the right.

I might have joined the Gloucesters and been educated  
By Arthur in my turn, but so it wasn't  
And what became of him I do not know:  
Perhaps he was a prisoner at Dunkirk

Or met a bullet in North Africa  
While I—but I am not among the presences  
Which crowd into my mind or one by one  
Appear out of the unacknowledged past.

A second war, to join that other one  
That hung about my boyhood like a dream.  
With cold steel clicking as the trench was taken:  
No real death could ever equal that.

And out of how many snug houses  
—Snug but impoverished as the world now is—  
Had come those who returned to bear trophies,  
A shell-case, polished, on the window-sill.

C. H. Sisson

# Long-lasting listings

## Julian Roberts

JOHN CARTER and JOHN SPARROW  
A. E. Housman: A Bibliography  
Second edition revised by William White  
94pp. St Paul's Bibliographies, Foxbury  
Meadow, Godalming, Surrey GU8 4AE. £14.  
0906795052  
LEONEDEL and DAN H. LAURENCE  
A Bibliography of Henry James  
Third edition revised with the assistance of  
James Rambeau  
428pp. Oxford University Press. £30.  
0198181868  
WARREN ROBERTS  
A Bibliography of D. H. Lawrence  
Second Edition  
626pp. Cambridge University Press. £45.  
052122958

These three books represent a stage in the bibliographical diaspora from Soho that began when the firm of Rupert Hart-Davis closed its doors in 1965. Soho is no longer a name that conjures up an image of high literary culture, and its bibliographies now come from Oxford, Cambridge and Godalming. Oxford seems to be the principal inheritor of the Soho style and titles, while Cambridge's interest in D. H. Lawrence is clearly linked to its edition of the letters and the major critical edition of the works. St Paul's Bibliographies have a few Soho titles, a few more inherited from the firm of Nicholas Vane which published some excellent modern author bibliographies in the 1960s (Graves, Muir, Churchill, Maugham) and a few scooped up from other sources. A reviewer is bound to salute the hardihood of their publishers; their layout makes them expensive to print, they are accumulations of minutely detailed facts which demand accuracy, they sell slowly (and depend for sales on recession-hit libraries and collectors); and reviewers are as picky as ever they were.

Why then the post-war boom in bibliography publishing which produced eighteen titles from Hart-Davis—to name only the leader in the field—gave Nicholas Vane a solid list of half a dozen books, and provided a ready sale for neatly spaced out listings of almost anyone who put pen to paper—even the late Shah of Iran? Looking back, one can discern a fascinating though not always explicit collaboration between booksellers, collectors and academics. What brought this about was the extension of book-collecting, particularly in America, to contemporary authors, and the simultaneous growth in undergraduate and (especially) post-graduate studies in English and American literature. Influential among the progenitors of series like the Soho Bibliographies, and periodicals like the *Book Collector*, were booksellers—like John Carter and Percy Muir—most of whose experience lay in ministering to American collectors and to the academic libraries which were ultimately taking over their collections. Author bibliographies told booksellers what to offer and then told collectors and librarians (even in Britain) what to look for. The bunch of entries under YEATS (William Butler) in the 1956-65 supplement to the British Museum's General Catalogue of Printed Books is only one indication that the library, too long indifferent to contemporary literature, was making the same use of Allen Wade's bibliography of Yeats as its American contemporaries.

Was there another perhaps uninvolved need behind the boom, that for untainted authority, in the wake of the Wise debacle? Wise had after all manipulated author bibliography for his own profit and glory to an extent which it has taken fifty years to measure. It will not, I hope, prove hubristic to say that the Soho school has lapsed in accuracy, some due to ignorance and some to the minor vanities of collectors, and that there are a few duds in the canon of, for example, Elliot or Auden; but that by and large integrity has triumphed. That triumph is due in part to compilers and publishers but it also owes something to an ingredient which was entirely lacking in Wise's heyday—the academic librarian. The authorities of the British Museum, whom no incububator or Elizabethan forger could have deceived, were the innocent accomplices in Wise's forgeries, by accepting his gifts and canonizing them in

the General Catalogue. The new post-war bibliographies instantly fell under scrutiny of a generation trained on McKerrow, Greg and, above all, Bowers and for whom John Carter and Graham Pollard's *Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets* had been required reading. Some of their reviews now make rather brash reading even for their middle-aged authors but there is no mistaking the tone, for example, in Philip Gaskell's bibliographical note on the Soho *Max Beerbohm (Book Collector, I, 1952)* or the TLS review of Sir Geoffrey Keynes's *Brooke*, August 27, 1954. These librarians saw bibliographies as reference tools which helped them build up national and university collections. If a collector-bibliographer made a rash statement about his copy and had not checked, say, the copy in the British Museum or the six copies at Texas, he was in trouble. In America, where these things are possible, there arose a breed of highly professional academic bibliographers, and at least two of the works now under review are traceable to such men. No doubt the formidable energy of Professor Todd, now directed at the firm of Tauchnitz, will further exemplify this. Nor should the influence of John Hayward, an editor of the *Book Collector* and as reviewer, be forgotten. The *Book Collector* has deservedly flourished, but it has never

Of the three works occasioning this survey, the revision of the Carter-Sparrow handlist (first published in *The Library* in 1940 and received into the Soho series in 1952) owes least to the bibliographical currents sketched above. For one thing, Housman's writings fit into two compartments: those of the poet and those of the professional classical scholar. A biographer does, and a critic may, need both; but a collector does not want his shelves lined with odd numbers of classical journals and this bibliography is, as John Carter's preface proclaims, "designed for the convenience of collectors and amateurs rather than for the instruction of literary critics and scholars". The attention of even a fair scholar might have ensured that "in duobus tomibus" (p. 12) did not go without comment or correction; *Scipio Contra Thebes* (sic) appears in the index but the name of its author does not, and the meticulous scholar Housman is still dogged beyond the grave by misprints. The bibliography, despite the assiduity of William White, whose additions to Carter and Sparrow bulk large both in *The Library* and the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, relies upon A. S. F. Gow's 1936 list for the articles in classical periodicals. It was a single sequence of numbers, and bibliographical description is minimal.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler's etching "Soupe à trois sous" was sold at Christie's last week.

quite regained the flavour of critical and concerned bibliography of Hayward's writing. The criteria he applied in his review in *The Library* for 1952 of Allen Wade's *W. B. Yeats* (the first of the Soho series) are a model for all who followed him as reviewer of bibliographies.

The achievements of the Soho revolution have been great. For while Michael Sadler (described recently by the veteran bibliographer Dan H. Laurence as an "annunciatory angel" for his 1928 *Trollope*) could only publish his work in a limited edition, Hart-Davis proved it possible to publish (in unlimited and therefore easily obtainable editions) in a form acceptable at once to the bibliophilic and academic communities, accounts of most major authors, and to preserve for living authors much important detail of publication that would otherwise have inevitably perished with those who remembered it or with the disavowing of publishers' records. A system of notation was devised which was flexible enough to be applied to widely differing circumstances of publication through different media. Attempts were made (not always with complete success) to standardize terms of physical description. Nevertheless, no bibliographer's authority proved strong enough to establish, for example, whether collation formulae should be given for machine-printed books where the unit of printing might be assumed to be larger than the traditional gathering of, say, sixteen leaves, which can still be found in modern books. *Henry James* and *D. H. Lawrence* are at odds here, with the former recording collations and the latter omitting them, even for hand-printed books like *Bay*. The authority of Professor Tanselle is insufficient to prescribe the universal inclusion of dust-jackets. How far, in fact, does a bibliographical description provide a surrogate book by recording the colour or weight of the paper employed, or the design of the type?

Now it is a rule in bibliography-criticism that it does not matter what a compiler leaves out provided he makes clear what is being left out. What stands out from this book is an unstated imbalance. Few pains have been spared to recover minute fragments of Housman's work—but why is there so little to say about Professor Tom Burns Haber's Centennial edition? If, as the note says, it went into three printings (who?) it must be fairly widespread and a description of its contents might be expected. Haber's *The Manuscript Poems* (1955) purportedly contains 800 uncollected lines and gets a description of precisely eight lines including the heading. Could this be unspoken disapproval of the use made of the Housman manuscripts in the Library of Congress, which acquired them through a series of booksellers (including Scribner's) in 1935? The process is described by John Carter in the *Book Collector* for 1955. There may be an ethical issue here, but descriptive bibliography is not about ethics.

If the Housman bibliography gives a rather scrappy and indecisive account of the present state of Housman editions, the picture given by the two other bibliographies is quite different. The scholarly and bibliophilic communities continue to hold Henry James and D. H. Lawrence in high regard. They are major writers who both pose a challenge, in different ways, to scholars and collectors, so that their bibliographies have not only to be kept in print, but augmented. At the moment it looks as if academic "rating" is a condition of survival and augmentation while the purely "collectors'" authors have vanished from the publishers' lists.

The Edel-Laurence-Rambeau *Henry James* from Oxford still gives that pleasure to the eye (despite the angry reddening of the binder's cloth) that the Hart-Davis style used to bring. So indeed it should, as it is an extremely skillful

reprinting job. The original sections, A for original works, B for contributions to books, and so on, were in the second edition prudently equipped with blank pages for Addenda. Most of them have now been filled, in Section A by description of the products of Leon Edel's editorial industry. The compilers have been faced with problems of a different kind by the continued appearance of what they rather archly call "examples of his epistolary art"; so Section C has run over into the blank Addenda pages of the earlier edition, and Section D, Contributions to periodicals, has swallowed up another blank half-page.

The use of reprinting techniques has not precluded extensive and valuable correction to some entries; notably to the publishing history of *The Ambassadors*. The intricacies of James's relations with his publishers have compelled extreme bibliographical scrupulousness in such matters as the collation, based on the examination of at least twelve copies, "Most scholars know by now that it is perilous to quote any passage of James' without collating all texts." The compilers' organizational skills only seem to desert them at one point, with *French Poets and Novelists*, of 1878 (A5a). James evidently revised this for the Tauchnitz edition of 1883 (A5b). It is odd to find no account of what actually happened here, particularly as Edel used the Leipzig text for his 1964 edition (A5d). But this is hidden away, 166 pages later. Surely there is a story here? This is a rare lapse in a bibliography of very high quality indeed.

The bibliographical problems in the work of Henry James arise not only from his revising, but from his profession of letters. His first "book", *A Passionate Pilgrim* of 1875, was preceded by eleven years of contributions to periodicals—about two hundred of them by the Edel and Laurence reckoning. The contrast with D. H. Lawrence is marked: a few stories and poems, mostly submitted on Lawrence's behalf by Jessie Chambers, precede *The White Peacock* of 1911. But although novels and the manuscript preparations for novels dominate Warren Roberts's bibliography, Lawrence was also to write "in almost every literary genre, novels, short stories, plays, poetry, essays and travel books; his work was published in a variety of formats, frequently in ephemeral pamphlets and periodicals or in limited editions by private presses and his difficulties with censorship further complicate Lawrence's bibliography". But while Lawrence's versatility (and his troubles with censorship) are what make Lawrence's bibliography interesting they do not make it difficult to compile. The technical problem is his enormous popularity, resulting in the publication of large editions subsequent to the first. Professor Roberts resorts to the degressive principle for these later printings, though perhaps not with perfect consistency. The Colonial issue of *The Rainbow* is given the full descriptive treatment (though no details of print numbers or of its history subsequent to the court action appear). On the other hand, the textually significant, though apparently not authoritative, New York edition of 1915 gets no formal description, though the circumstances of its publication are given in a long note. Roberts's work was deservedly praised in its first edition for its accuracy and comprehensiveness and it has benefited in its second both from the research undertaken for the Cambridge edition (this is particularly apparent in the long list of Lawrence manuscripts and typescripts) and the continuing enthusiasm of Lawrence collectors. The list of books and pamphlets on Lawrence (an unusual feature in a Soho-descended bibliography) make it additionally useful, to include periodical articles would have swelled the book to an intolerable size (and price). The unwary reader does, however, need to be warned that Cambridge University Press has solved the problem of republishing expensive bibliographies in a different way from Oxford. Roberts's readable and illuminating notes to each entry are in two sequences. The first sequence is reset, with minor corrections from the first edition. The second sequence, Notes (2) and Reviews (2), contains new thoughts, many of which correct what has gone before.

Both the James and Lawrence bibliographies are essential companions in the study of two great novelists.



# Good artists versus good husbands

## William McBrien

CLARISSA M. LORENZ  
 Lorelei Two: My Life with Conrad Aiken  
 231pp. Athens, GA: University of Georgia  
 Press (distributed in the UK by Eurospan).  
 \$19.95.  
 08203 06614  
 F. W. and F. C. BONNELL  
 Conrad Aiken: A Bibliography (1902-1978)  
 291pp. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library.  
 \$45.  
 087328 1187

"Unfortunately there's no training school for poets' wives", writes Clarissa Lorenz in this memoir of the decade she spent as the lover and then second wife of Conrad Aiken - or "Lorelei Two" as the misogynistic poet dubbed her. Perhaps her hook, and other accounts of being married to genius published recently, will make a contribution as cautionary tales. "I learned too late that my real rivals were not women but the daemon", says Mrs Lorenz, and adds to Jung's view that "a creative person has little power over his own life . . . those pay dearly who have the creative fire", her observation that "so do those who are closest to them".

Clarissa, whose struggles sometimes evoke those of her fictional namesake, started out in Milwaukee, but by 1926, the year that we and her future husband are introduced to her, she is living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, "a lapsed Catholic", conducting an affair with the medical director of a Boston hospital. She is also a pianist of considerable skill, employed at the Harvard Psychological Laboratory and, as a fledgling journalist, writing a profile of Conrad Aiken for the *Boston Evening Transcript* - a newspaper made legendary by T. S. Eliot. Aiken's Harvard classmate (the class of 1911 included, besides these two poets, Walter Lippmann, Heywood Brown, Robert Benchley and E. E. Cummings). From the time of their first meeting, Clarissa and Aiken clung to each other, although he had a wife and two children in England and she had her affair with Carl. "The opportunity to serve genius" in what seems from the start to have attracted Clarissa, in flight from a German papa who commanded her to *sprechen Deutsch* and shook her like a rag doll when she faltered.

Conrad thought of himself as an extension of

his grandfather, a Unitarian minister who embraced Darwin and was defrocked. But as Clarissa got to know the man who became her lover for three years and husband for seven, she discovered that in fact he was "possessed" by his parents' murder-suicide which occurred when he was aged eleven. She found Aiken a fragmented personality: "romantic lover, intellectual, poet, gadfly, puritan, sensualist - all splintered by childhood traumas . . . but a boon to poetry". Clarissa was self-confessedly "blind to poetry": once listening to a friend read some lines that sounded familiar she asked, "Who wrote it?" "Your husband," he replied with embarrassment. "If you must wallow in ignorance," said Aiken on the way home, "at least have the decency not to advertise it."

"I intend to run this marriage", Aiken told Clarissa shortly before the wedding took place, with William Carlos Williams and his wife, Florence, as witnesses. That was in 1930, "after three years of turbulence". The couple soon sailed for England. It was Conrad's twentieth crossing and the first for Clarissa, who feared that she "would be cold-shouldered 'by our mother-in-law' as James Russell Lowell called Great Britain". They soon moved to a house in Rye where Aiken had lived with his first wife, and remained there for seven years during which he steadily drank gin and Clarissa took monthly doses of ergot. Here is a volley which seems all too typical of the domestic dialogue: Clarissa: "You demolish me for trying to prevent people from sabotaging your work." Conrad: "Then stop meddling in my life." Clarissa: "Then stop taking out your frustrations on me."

The gloom was occasionally relieved by the visits Conrad's children made to Rye, and by a number of writers and painters whom the Aikens saw socially in the 1930s. Harold Knight and his wife, Dame Laura, E. F. Benson, H. D. and Bryher, Radclyffe Hall and Lady Troubridge, and Hardy's widow are among the gallery of friends with whom Mrs Lorenz, sharp-eyed and sometimes droll of phrase, brightens the book for the reader. (What a relief to put aside Conrad for a few pages we feel, and so must she.) Referring to Henry James, Rosa Lewis, the famous proprietress of the Cavendish Hotel, told the Aikens, "Harry was always better on the sheets than between them. I wouldn't give two pence for him between them." A visitor who couldn't see

called fun was Malcolm Lowry, that tragic genius who in adolescence chose Aiken as his *maitre* and for several years spent summers in the poet's household as a paying guest. He and Conrad would get drunk together and misbehave in outrageous ways. According to Mrs Lorenz, Lowry was afflicted in his early twenties by a crippling fear of masturbation and homosexuality. John Gould Fletcher, the American Imagist, so disturbed he often had to enter hospital, was another poet the Aikens sometimes looked after.

As time passed, the domestic violence accelerated. Conrad flung a mug filled with beer at Clarissa. Once, in a jealous rage, he tried to choke her, but her cries for help brought a neighbour. "I lived in perpetual fear of and for Conrad", but she yielded to the plea he made after a suicide attempt: "Don't ever leave me, no matter what I say or do." Arnold Bennett was right, at least in this instance: Mrs Lorenz quotes his view that "one always has to choose between a good husband and a good artist". Clarissa was long-suffering, docilely destroying pages of her diary at Conrad's insistence after his prying eyes discovered them. "Whatever my vexations and grievances they were a small price to pay for the rich life Conrad provided", she writes, although the evidence for this claim seems slim. While Conrad made literary yields out of their domestic torment (and Mrs Lorenz roams widely through his writings to demonstrate the alchemy he practised), she wrote occasional pieces for *Country Life*, the *Listener* and other publications. Her writing produced "friction" at home, perhaps because at its best Mrs Lorenz's prose is sufficiently accomplished to be envied. (Describing a crossing to France she recalls "freighters gliding by the Batavian liner like jewelled caskets under a full moon and leaving a silver snail's trail on the channel".)

A friend wrote to her that "ingratiating wives deserve what they get" and gradually Clarissa seems to have agreed. In 1936 Conrad preceded her to America, where he was teaching and, unbeknownst to Clarissa, had begun an affair with the woman who was to become "Lorelei Three". At his request, Clarissa sailed for Boston on December 11, the day Edward VIII abdicated. Waiting for the dock of the *Queen Mary* to clear so that she could throw herself into the sea, Clarissa was handed a cable from Robert Nichols who presciently told her she must not yield to suicide. (Ironical-

ly it was Stevie Smith, "nuts about death" herself, who gave Clarissa's London address to Nichols.) His letter "shook [her] out of a morbid impulse" and she firmly resolved to face her new life.

Soon after Conrad married his third wife, his fortunes improved and eventually he could comfortably afford not only the house in Rye, but a summer home on Cape Cod. Friends asked Clarissa if she missed him. "Of course," she said candidly she "did not live in lonely chastity". One of her lovers succeeded in fleeing most of her savings in order to pay for his girl-friends' abortions. Near the end of his life, Mrs Lorenz's prose declines: clichés suddenly abound ("Hillel put it in a nutshell"), and driven with the brakes on for most of my life"; "my achievements fell far short of my potential"). We can see how carelessly eager Mrs Lorenz is to turn her back on "Lorelei Two". In the end she seems to desire her survival to an enduring sense of humour and clings lack of mirth as a fault in Aiken. Very little cheerfulness broke into his life and Mrs Lorenz is hard pressed to find any levity which to lighten her account of it. "God pity poets with *Weltschmerz* struggling to stay alive and sane", she writes, and even the least prayerful of her readers will be moved by this story to say, Amen.

Was Aiken's genius worth the price he and others paid for it? Many hellave no. His short stories "Mr Arcularis" and "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" are little masterpieces, and his novel, *Blue Voyage*, is still compelling. The poems he called "Preludes" are, treasured by many, and the autobiographical *Ushant* is rightly counted as a classic. "America's most underrated writer", Anthony Burgess has called Aiken. Certainly he was among the most fecund. By the age of eighty he had published thirty-five volumes of poetry, a memoir, ten novels, collections of short stories, essays and criticism. Two years after the poet's death, the Huntington Library in California acquired the Aiken archive and its press has published *Conrad Aiken: A Bibliography (1902-1978)*, handsomely printed and with annotations. The book is a reliable and indispensable tool for those scholars and critics at work on Aiken's life and writings who in time may make the world of this puzzling writer more apparent.

## Outer Bloomsbury

### Keith Walker

HELEN SHAW (Editor)  
 Dear Lady Gingers: An exchange of letters between Lady Ottoline Morrell and D'Arcy Cresswell.  
 145pp. Century. £12.50.  
 07126 02895

D'Arcy Cresswell was a youngling man in the 1930s; when it was fashionable for sensitive young men to be homosexual (the fact of his name added, to his New Zealand upbringing made this circumstance inevitable, anyway), and to fancy themselves poets, without visible means of support. He struggled on in penury with only a manservant through the 1930s until the new Labour government of 1936 found him a job in the state forestry service. It was not to write scripts for documentaries about strapping ex-amen, but to work with his own hands. He lasted less than six months.

I was all right until they put us on cutting "linea" (no dense syntax & scrub) with stab-hooks. This knocked me up. My arms got numb (an old war trouble) my hands became numb & powerless & swollen, & I couldn't sleep.

All this is told in these letters between Cresswell and Lady Ottoline Morrell. The story begins in the early 1930s when Cresswell returned to London, where he had been during the war, to assist at the publication of his autobiography, *The Poet's Progress*. Arnold Bennett discovered (as they used to say) the book; and Lady Ottoline Morrell, who had been up for her "Thursdays" - tea and literary gossip at 40 Clarendon Street. The exchange of letters between Morrell and Cresswell continued after

Cresswell returned to New Zealand, first to his parents' farm in Canterbury, where he seems to have done nothing very particular, and later to a beach house in Auckland where he was able to add sea bathing to his other activities.

Cresswell had difficulty with Morrell's handwriting: "your prancing cavorting lines lead off into the twilight & I am learning to know that country, its slight sepulchral shadows, its evening light, its distant horizon & imminent pitfalls". The example of his style is not unlike Lady Ottoline, through whose veins, she tells us, could be felt coursing the blood of the "Wellesleys, & the De Montmorencys & Baskincks" (so refined as to put the word "Baskincks" in quotation marks as if unsure of its precise connotation). Cresswell responds with his "thoughts of modern poetry": "Goodly Goodman & Higgins are outstanding . . . Eliot, Read, Spender, & Auden, the foreboding quacks of the moment".

When Cresswell came back to London at the end of the 1930s, Lady Ottoline was dead. She had sent him books in New Zealand, and he had responded with a teasing affection which included taking her ideas seriously. However, whatever infatuation he felt for her, it was not a love affair. The exchange is mildly enjoyable, and the letters may serve to put in whatever infatuation he felt for her. They are edited by Helen Shaw and beautifully printed by Auckland University Press.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALAN BROWN

SECOND-CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. POSTMASTER: THIS PUBLICATION IS PERMITTED TO MAIL AT THE SPECIAL RATE OF \$1.00 PER COPY PER YEAR BECAUSE IT IS A PERIODICAL PUBLISHED AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR.

# Fashioning a friend of childhood

## Hugh Brogan

HUMPHREY CARPENTER and MARI PRICHARD  
 The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature  
 587pp. Oxford University Press. £15.  
 0192115820

A companion to children's literature is a delightful idea. The thing blossoms before the mind's eye as soon as it is mentioned: a companion indeed, a book where the reader, old or young, can browse pleasantly for ever, never knowing what he may find next, whether a short biography of a favourite writer, the explanation of some baffling allusion in a favourite work, information about books and authors not heard of before that might appeal, ideas for presents, a history of the subject, discursive or critical articles provoking new thought about it; and, almost before all, the pleasure of the author's style, mind and personality, unobtrusively making a work of reference a book in the full sense, a book of the same family as Sir Paul Harvey's *Companion to English Literature*, on which the *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (from now on, *OCCL*) is avowedly modelled. Harvey's volume has its weaknesses; but I don't believe it can ever have had an enemy. I am still always looking things up in it. Purchasers of *OCCL* will find it equally useful. It has some faults which are worse than weaknesses; nevertheless it is a substantial achievement, and it only costs fifteen pounds.

It is a couple of hundred pages shorter than Harvey and probably has rather fewer entries; but then the field it covers is smaller. No one can pretend that the publishers have been niggardly with space or anything else. The binding is not quite so splendid as it would have been thirty years ago, but it is still very handsome, and the dust jacket carries a reproduction of a beautifully apt Renoir ("The Children's Afternoon at Varengeville"). Inside, the pages are elegantly laid out, I only spotted two misprints, and the plentiful illustrations are invariably well chosen and agreeable to look at. That is fitting: the greatest strength of *OCCL* is probably its comprehensive and sensitive coverage of the whole topic of pictures and picture-books. There is no entry on illustration, discuss its principles and pulling the whole topic together; but every important artist gets his or her due, and the evolution of the art is made plain. Another undoubted asset is the Carpenter's prose-style. Inevitably, in such a vast undertaking, the language is sometimes a little flat, but sometimes it sparkles; overall, the whole thing reads as easily and fluently as a reference book can. The only stylistic blemish I detected was the recurrence of the empty phrase, "of all times", as in "the outstanding contribution of all times came from Rudyard Kipling . . .". Perhaps it can be eliminated in the second edition.

I am quite sure there will be a second edition, in which the authors, as they promise, will correct all the errors in the first which are drawn to their attention, so it would be inappropriate to denounce all the small blunders inevitable in the first version of such an enterprise. It is not the authors' fault that they could not read everything to which they had to refer. They have not read Kipling's *Land and Sea Tales for Scouts and Guides*. I do not blame them; I have never met anyone who has, though the book is quite common in second-hand shops; I mention the matter only because, hidden within that unpromising cover is "His Gift", one of the best comic tales which Kipling ever wrote. It is the one story he wrote especially for the collection, and is his characteristically subversive tribute to the scouting movement, in the same sense that *Stalky* is his tribute to the public schools.

However, the authors can be blamed for a little piece of inadvertence: there are no separate entries for Scotland and Ireland, and the one for Wales is inadequate (no mention of Dylan Thomas). Of course they did not mean to endorse English cultural imperialism; yet they have missed something by not investigating these countries. For instance, they might have discovered Count Curly Wee, the noble

pig who used to saunter with his friends through a comic strip in the *Irish Independent*, and brighten Christmas as an annual.

"Purl and plurl!" wails Gwendoline, "I know I'll never learn!"  
 "Of course you will!" says Lady Bun, who is a little stern.  
 "All lady rabbits ought to knit, however green and rich."  
 "Don't want to" mutters Gwendoline, and drops another stitch.

As this quotation shows, Curly Wee and company were far livelier creations than Rupert Bear and Teddy Tail, who are both given entries. I hope this blemish will be corrected, next time round.

But (and oil this has been leading up to a quite colossal "but") the care, intelligence and abundance of this survey are outweighed by its serious faults, faults which cannot be eliminated without rewriting the book from beginning to end. A good many potential customers may feel themselves abominably cheated if, having bought the book, they start to read it. Such customers must be warned.

Carpenter and Prichard have not seen their task in the terms I began by sketching. They are not to be blamed for that. But a reviewer may reasonably ask, what then were their original specifications, and were they good ones, and how successfully have they been executed? I cannot find agreeable answers to these questions. Blurbs are not evidence of authors' intentions, but in this case the blurbs do accurately describe what has been achieved:

The historical span stretches from the early romances and legends enjoyed by children . . . to the major publishing industry that children's books represent today. Equot attention is given to works from Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand . . . Apart from being *online qua non* for parents, teachers, and librarians, the *Oxford*

*Companion to Children's Literature* contains useful reference material for collectors of early printed works and students of folk literature; it is besides an entertaining book for anyone concerned with children's educational and imaginative development.

The omission leaps to the eye. This book will not be a companion for the only true readers of children's literature, children themselves. The adults have entered into a conspiracy to take the books away. Nor does *OCCL* contain much to please literary critics. This monument to a major publishing industry, in brief, has very little to do with literature; and it would bore most children to death.

In part, the Opies are to blame. *OCCL* began as one of their projects (it is dedicated to Peter Opie's memory) and, I guess, has drawn largely on their researches. Certainly it bears the mark of its originators on every page. The Opies were antiquarians first and foremost, which is why columns upon columns of this book are filled with information about chapbooks, primers, catechisms, hornbooks and eighteenth-century booksellers, of very little interest to anyone but librarians and auctioneers. I expect to see *OCCL* regularly cited in booksellers' catalogues; but do we really expect an *Oxford Companion* to be primarily an aid to commerce?

And if the Opies had a fault, it was a certain fussy philistinism. Their entologies of narrative and children's verse were disappointingly conventional, according to the conventions of 1900; and the preface to *OCCL* remarks, betrayingly, that the Opies originally conceived it because, their chosen subject of study being "the whole of childhood, and not just its folklore, they wanted to turn to its literature". This implies, first, that "literature", for present purposes, is valued not for itself but for the light it throws on childhood in the past and present;

second, that it will be taken in the widest terms, and almost lose its meaning in the process. Cartoons, films, radio and television are to be called in evidence. So inclusive an approach is admirable; but then why are there no entries for opera, ballet and song? Music has done more than Walt Disney ever will to preserve and enhance the great fairy-tales and sharpen children's sense of drama and poetry. *Stories from Wagner* found its way into many nurseries; the legacy of Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky and Britten only needs to be mentioned. None of this has weighed with the authors; yet one looked for better at their hands than at those of the Opies.

The publishers are also to blame. It was no doubt pressure from their marketing division that compelled the inclusion of so many tedious brief entries summarizing works of children's fiction from the white Commonwealth, most of which, in this form, sound dreadfully identical. And what is to be said of entries like that on Latin America?

Some Latin American countries can hardly be said to have a children's literature at all; others have produced a few authors of distinction, but none has a substantial body of good juvenile writing and there seems little prospect of much improvement.

Carpenter and Prichard, under pressure, have had to devote so much time to compiling dozens of similar entries that they have not had leisure to notice how inadequately they have handled the literature of a not unimportant country, France. Perrault gets far more space than he warrants (each of his tales is paraphrased at length); but Dumas père, Alexander the Great, only gets seven lines - and his death is misdated by thirteen years. He is not mentioned in the entry on historical fiction, none of the plots of his masterpieces is summarized, nor are any of his characters identified (though Bilbo Baggins gets two separate entries). Porthos figures, but as the name of J. M. Barrie's dog. To be sure, if you call a dog Porthos I will love him, but it is beneath *OCCL* to explain why, just as it cannot bother to analyse Dumas's immense appeal to the young, or place him critically in the history of literature, or even sketch his amazing life and personality. Nor can the book find space for Guignol, though there are long entries for Punch and Judy and for puppets. Perhaps the authors were too busy compiling the entry on Sri Lanka ("By the late 1970s the Sri Lanka government had begun to take steps to formulate a national policy on children's books") to notice obligations closer to home.

Carpenter and Prichard have also done their best to ignore the fact that the definition of children's literature is even more difficult than the definition of children, who are at least human beings of a certain age. For most of history they and the grown-ups have read, sung or listened to the same works - as late as 1888 Dickens (patronized by *OCCL* as "the immensely popular Victorian novelist") was voted the favourite author of English boys. This all-important fact raises great critical difficulties for readers in children's literature, none of them faced in *OCCL*. Instead a purely commercial definition of the subject is implied: children's literature is what the major publishing industry produces. It excludes most writing by children: *The Young Visitors* is in, but *Love and Friendship*, *Angria* and *Gondal* are not. Nor is there any reference to those who have encouraged and published children's writing. But there are many uninteresting Who's Who entries on children's librarians and current (adult) writers.

Yet it can hardly be the fault of commercial pressures that poetry is handled so unimaginatively. It must be the authors' own blind spot. They have a good eye for comic quotations, and take pains to supply early scatological variants of two nursery rhymes; but except for a verse from Blake there is nothing to lift the heart. The entry on "poetry for children" is only a list of books and authors (and leaves out *The Lays of Ancient Rome*), and the entries on individual poets are invariably flat. The articles on Edward Lear and his work are particularly disappointing. His nonsense rhymes are often attacked for being inferior limericks, without the wit and neatness of the Norman Douglas kind. The *OCCL* was the obvious place to point out that Lear's limericks were never meant to stand on their own: each is the Siantese twin of an illustration, and must not be

## A disturbing past

### Wilhelmine Harrod

PETER LEVI  
 The Flutes of Autumn  
 191pp. Harvill. £7.95.  
 0002162466

Peter Levi was born in Ruislip, educated at Prior Park School and Campion Hall, Oxford; became a Jesuit priest, but left the Order and is now happily married (to Cyril Connolly's widow) and living in an old cottage in North Oxfordshire. This autobiography is about places as much as people: the first chapter, describing Ruislip before and during the last war, suggests a comparison with Richard Cobb's description of Tunbridge Wells at the same time; in his *Still Life*. The two books have some similarities, including loving descriptions of servants, eccentric characters and local landscape. Both writers have a very deep affection for, and understanding of, the *genius loci*; but Cobb is far easier on the reader than Levi. Levi's lyrical style in *The Flutes of Autumn*, with its frequent short sentences, must have been more fun for the author than it is to read.

But the book is rewarding too. Levi is brave enough to admit to having enjoyed hunting, even after hunting in the Devonshire rivers and the Welsh marches, though he would not do it now. He and a friend used to walk to London from Oxford, through the night. He still spends hours in the Ashmolean Museum gazing at the Alfred Jewel. He is not as interested in religion as one would expect; he is kind about the Church of England but rather mysterious, if not doubtful, about his

own. He says, "Religion for me was like a flock of birds moving across the winter fields and among the stony villages."

Archaeology is his real interest. He seems (though nothing is ever quite clear in this confusing book) to hate the Romans: "a nauseating people". What he loves is England and the English, but he is appalled by history. He is obsessed by all the wars and choppings and hackings, and by casual violence, and tortures and executions and the treatment of slaves and animals. What he longs for (and who doesn't?) is peace and quiet in unspoiled places, but even when he finds such a place the sadness and brutality of the past are conjured up to spoil it. At Blythburgh Church on an unusual foray into East Anglia, he asks, "Is our history not as terrible as any nation's?"

Peter Levi is Jewish and a Roman Catholic. Perhaps because of this he can stand back and see things that more ordinary English people cannot. It should give him an advantage, and it certainly means that his range is enormous. He is a scholar, who knows Greece and the classics; he has distant roots in Byzantium (his father imported carpets from Constantinople) and he has many interesting friends. He has some good remarks from Maurice Bowra: "English archaeologists were the only ones who were so virtuous they preferred to dig where they wouldn't find anything" - and he admired the great Sir John Beazley, who loved "pots and poetry". A friend was David Jones, the poet and painter, and Levi's Requiem Sermon for him, published as an appendix to this book, is a moving tribute to the man, and a statement of faith which is deeper than any other religious reference in the book.



judged alone. Carpenter and Prichard are content to reproduce the critical commonplace, first launched by Aldous Huxley, that the rhymes are largely concerned with conflict between eccentrics and society. The only comment offered on the later nonsense poems is that Lear allowed self-pity to creep in, which might equally be said of Shakespeare's sonnets, and is equally unhelpful. The freshness of feeling and language, the way in which nonsense is transmuted into a symbolic mythology, all that makes Lear worth reading today goes unremarked.

The authors remark repeatedly that we are living in a second golden age of children's literature, a statement for which they can offer no evidence, except the tautology that we like most today what today we like most. There are a great many more children's writers than there were thirty or fifty years ago, and we may think that most of them are geniuses; but whether the next generation will think so I rather doubt. The up and down of fashion is inexorable. This is clearly indicated by the *OCCL* itself. Carpenter and Prichard are clearly uninterested in and unimpressed by most of the writers who worked between, roughly, 1918 and 1950. So to make room for today's authors they leave a great many of their predecessors out, which falsifies the overall picture of children's fiction. For instance, there is nothing on Violet Needham. Although she is out of print today and had artistic faults she also had some real virtues; the point is, forty years ago she was there, with many devoted admirers, and she should certainly appear in the *OCCL*. Other writers of her generation who do appear are judged severely. Arthur Ransome is damned with very faint praise. Eleanor Farjeon's reputation "seems largely the result of the fact that few children's writers of real distinction were practising in the period in which she flourished". A regular accusation is that yesterday's writers were guilty of "condescension" to the working class. This glib dismissal as seen at its most unpleasant in the entry on a living writer, John Rowe Townsend. His early works, we are told, can be faulted because they

are too much like stereotyped adventure stories and, "more seriously", they fail to avoid being patronizing in their portraits of working-class life. It does not occur to the authors that they are being patronizing themselves. In matters such as this they seem to rely heavily on theoretical writers on children's literature and on organizations such as CTSY (the Campaign to Impede Sex Stereotyping in the Young) and this is not the best way to arrive at an informed, fair and sensitive literary judgment.

On the evidence of this book we are far from living in a golden age; on the contrary, children's literature is in a bad way. Fiction is overimportant and publishers insist that it must be kept short. A triple alliance of hack authors, schoolteachers and librarians tries to dictate what children shall read in exactly the same dismal spirit as the hacks, evangelical parsons and Sunday school spinsters of the early nineteenth century, to whose activities the *OCCL* devotes far too much space (with the result, among others, that children's literature seems to be exclusively a Protestant thing; is there no identifiable Catholic tradition?) *OCCL* provides ample material for a compendium of critical clichés. American tales must always be about a funny, sensitive, tough and wise-cracking teenager whose adult world is going bananas. English teenage fiction is obsessed with sex and comprehensive schooling. Fiction for children proper is sub-Garner fantasy: boy and girl find magic sword and use it to kill the Great Ghoul under Cader Idris (for some reason the Pennines and the Highlands are not considered romantic any more). History, adventure and comedy are out.

Against this dreary background true talent blazes, as it always has. But it takes a great deal of talent to cross the generations, which makes me think the authors rash to use the word "classic" to describe contemporary writers as often as they do. But if we cannot know what children will be reading in the twenty-first century, at least the *OCCL* (first edition) exists to tell the future what was being written today. For that the future will be grateful, even if the present is not.



One of Bert Kitchen's illustrations for his picture book *Animal Alphabet* (Patrick Hardy, £6.50, 07444000), which is published this month. The book consists of twenty-six large-format plates of Kitchen's hyper-naïve and slightly sinister paintings.

## Vile jelly

David Nokes

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

*King Lear*  
Illustrated by Ian Pollock  
139pp. Sidgwick & Jackson/Oval. £6.95  
(Paperback, £4.95).  
0283990643  
*Romeo and Juliet*  
Illustrated by Von  
121pp. Michael Joseph. £4.95.  
0718123573

Cartoon versions of Shakespeare have evidently caught on and we may soon see a whole new gallery of comic-strip super-heroes from *Hamlet* to *Hamlet* bestriding the bookstands like colossal centrefolds. Oval Projects, who set the fashion with their cartoon version of *Macbeth* in 1982, quickly followed up with *Othello* and now *King Lear*. Not to be outdone, Michael Joseph have snapped up the services of Von, the illustrator of *Macbeth*, to launch their own cartoon version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Both publishers clearly have their sights on the lucrative set-book market and hence are careful to provide full texts of the plays (though which texts they don't say). All other scholarly or editorial matter is rigorously excluded however, in an apparent attempt to persuade reluctant O-levellers that Shakespeare is really fun, and that *King Lear* can be read in much the same way as *Captain Marvel* or *Dr Death*.

Von has stuck to a Disneyesque plasticity of line and feature, filled in with bold flat colours. Apart from one or two full-page examples of pre-Raphaelite pastiche, his frames are little more than a decorative frieze, picked out with hearts and flowers, gothic columns and star-crossed skies. His chosen style is a version of Hollywood baroque that turns Verona into an old-world Toy Town situated in a province in Ruritania. His is the square approach, square backgrounds, square speech-bubbles and square jaws. There is something reassuringly safe, one might almost say conventional, about this fairy-tale setting. But Ian Pollock, the illustrator of *King Lear*, has chosen a surreal, nightmarish idiom of grotesque visual distortions. The cover proudly boasts "Pollock's

reputation for "strange and disturbing" illustrations and here he has adopted a style which owes more to the political cartoons of Soreman and Scarfe than to the common forms of story-book illustration.

Pollock's characters appear like strange primitive life-forms drowning in a sea of ocean. Lear is a red-eyed invertebrate blob, bloated human jelly-fish with whiskery tentacles which slowly deflates from page to page. The courtiers who surround him are (astonishingly) sea-anemones, mysteriously changing shape to suit their moods. Superimposed upon this polyp's eye view of the universe is a level of social coding for easy character identification. Edmund is a punk, with sunken eyes and a tombstone skull. Edgar is an ageing hippy with long hair and John Lennon glasses. Cordelia and Regan are a couple of 1920s flappers, though often reduced, by a form of grotesque metonymy, to giant pairs of blood-red lips, pointing like devouring vulvar molluscs on a ocean bed. The Fool is a booby-boy in a garish and braces with an enormous clown's nose dominating his spotty face, like an inflated condom.

The effect of all this is certainly grotesque, abandoning any sense of the tenderness of humanity and hence the tragedy of the play is replaced with a form of savage sadism. What is most disturbing, however, is the undeniable power of these nightmare images. Whereas Von's illustrations are merely silly, worst silly, at best decorative, Pollock's images sent a definite interpretation of the play. He is more like an artistic director than a mere illustrator of the text and has created a world whose psychedelic effects and haunting images turn *King Lear* into a form of video horror. This is a brutal post-Hiroshima vision in which all flesh is vile jelly, and virtue, as represented by Cordelia, is a ghostly hallucination. The power of this imagery is made the more disturbing by the inventive wit of many of the details, such as the suspended pair of severed heads which Lear snips his kingdom into three, or the hanging bird-cage from which Lear and Gloucester laugh at glided butlerettes. The cartoon book is clever, violent, iconoclastic and, will, I fear, be very influential with schoolchildren.

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Stanley Andreksi is Professor of Sociology at the University of Reading.  
Alan Bell is Librarian of Rhodes House, Oxford.  
Hugh Brogan's *The Life of Arthur Ransome* was published last year.  
Julian Budden is the author of *The Opus of Verdi* (3 volumes).  
Anthony Burgess's novels include *Earthly Powers*, 1981.  
Valentine Cunningham is the author of *Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel*, 1975.  
Martin Dadds is Lecturer in the University of London and is Editor of *English*.  
Katherine Duncan-Jones's *Selected Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* was published in 1980.  
E. C. Fernie's *The Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons* was published earlier this year.  
David Gebhard is co-author, with Robert Winter, of *A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles*, which was published earlier this year.  
Jeremy Hardie is a businessman who was previously Fellow and Tutor in Economics of Keele College, Oxford.  
Wilhelmine Harrod is joint author of the *Shell Guide to Norfolk*, fourth edition 1982.  
Robert Hewison's *Footlights: A hundred years of Cambridge comedy* was published last year.  
David Kelley is a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.  
Kathleen Leonon is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Hull.  
A. L. Le Queux's *The Bodyline Controversy* was published in 1983.  
David Lodge's most recent novel, *Small World: An academic romance*, was published earlier this year.  
D. W. Lomas is Professor of Spanish at the University of Birmingham.  
William McBrien is Professor of English at Hofstra University, New York.  
P. J. Marshall is Professor of History at King's College, London.  
B. K. Matlal is Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at the University of Oxford.  
Andrew Motion's most recent collection of poems, *Secret Narratives*, was published last year.  
Julian Roberts is Keeper of Printed Books at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.  
Michael Rosen is the author of *Hegel's Dialectic and Its Criticism*, 1982.  
Samuel Scheffler's *The Rejection of Consequentialism* was published in 1982.  
Lord Trend was Secretary of the Cabinet from 1963 to 1973.  
Malcolm Vale is a Fellow of St John's College, Oxford.  
John Wain's *Poems for the Zodiac* was published in 1980.  
Keith Walker is a lecturer in English at University College London.  
Adrian Woolridge is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford.

## INFORMATION, PLEASE

Robert Burton (1577-1640): locatoin of books from Burton's personal library, outside the Bodleian or Christ Church; for a bibliography. Nicolas Kieseling. Linacre College, Oxford OX1 3JA.

Elbert Hubbard: information sought about his journal *The Philistine: A Periodical of Protest* (1895-1915), published in East Aurora, New York.

Bruce White. Gallaudet College, Washington, DC 20002, USA.

John Barlas (1860-1914), poet and anarchist: whereabouts of his unpublished autobiography, letters and papers; for research purposes. Alan Anderson. 137 Warrender Park Road, Edinburgh EH9 1DS.

Gustav Landauer (1870-1919), writer and socialist politician: manuscripts, letters, photographs etc; for a collected edition of Landauer's works to be published by Verlag Lambert Schneider, Heidelberg. Norbert Alenhofer.

of Institut für Deutsche Sprache und Literatur II, J. W. Goethe-Universität, Gräfrasse 76, D-6000 Frankfurt-am-Main, German Federal Republic.

Cecil McGivern, W. B. Maxwell, H. W. Neilson, Kathleen O'Brien: owners of copyright in the works of these writers sought; for an anthology of contributions to *The Author*, in which it is hoped to include their work. Richard Findlater. The Author, 84 Drayton Gardens, London SW10 9SD.

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## The Backwoods Girls

Joanna Motion

SYLVIA CASSEY

*Behind the Attic Wall*  
315pp. Bodley Head. £5.95.  
0370308107

Veteran of eight or nine boarding schools, Maggie can aim up a headmistress at a glance. She knows all about the experience of entering a class halfway through term; the tactful briefing her classmates will get before her arrival ("I know you are all eager to cooperate in making Maggie a happy member of the class"); and the inevitable course she will run from being highly popular to sixth grade pariah. So, at the latest school, she short-circuits the whole process. Up on the fire escape, splitting at would-be rescuers, she realizes with satisfaction "that for the first time ever she had managed to skip entirely the brief period when everyone would try to be nice".

The central character in Sylvia Cassidy's first full-length novel is convincing and engrossing, but not exactly lovable. Maggie has got her life stripped right down. She owns no photographs or knick-knacks to clutter her chest of drawers; only a tatty pack of cards for patience. She determinedly has no friends. When there is nowhere else to be sent away to, she finds herself in a forbidding house, formerly a girls' academy, in the care of two great-aunts who are interested in her nutrition but not much else about her. She summons company out of her head in the form of a chorus of "Backwoods Girls", to ignorant that they take everything about ruffled Maggie for sophistication and finesse.

The presence of this admiring audience eggs Maggie on to trouble-making her aunt's jewelry, tottering into the wet garden in an evening dress, wrecking the swing. What rescues her from this and way of life is a sort of ghost story. She begins to tune in to voices in the walls holding matter-of-fact conversations

("IT SAYS HERE THERE ARE WASH-TUBS FOR SALE"). And her fascination with these slivers from another existence survives the disappointment of discovering that the voices belong to what seem to be two old-fashioned dolls. This couple, peculiarly bound up with the history of the house, inhabit a literal-minded world that pursues its own logic. Entering it, Maggie opens up an imaginative reach for herself, a context in which she owes commitment and responsibility: "It was a good thing I came. They all need me there. I'm their caretaker, sort of."

Not that she is wholly reclaimed. Maggie learns important lessons, but not a miracle cure, from Timothy John and Miss Christabel. Even after their recognition of her as "the right one", she still wobbles on the edge of her old identity, threatening danger to herself and her friends. *Behind the Attic Wall* dissolves the boundary between fantasy and reality. Down-to-earth Maggie spins her internal fairy story of the ghost-dolls follows hard-headed rules. We know from the structure of the book however that her future is kinder and that she is destined for something like family life: her experiences at Adelphi Hills Academy are interlarded as flashbacks from a more settled existence, with adopted sisters dispossessing the Backwoods Girls.

Sylvia Cassidy's novel is neither the familiar rough-times-at-school story, nor the inner-life-as-refuge variant. Her prose is both comfortable and striking: it creates a satisfying exploration of a contemporary setting in which magical elements play a natural and integrated part. She is deft in presenting both the hidden life in the attic and the blacker downstairs world. Her portrait of the well-meaning school, which goes in for such horrors as the "class wish", is chillingly credible: "The wish was full of words like 'peace' and 'brotherhood' and 'no more pollution' when what everyone really wished for was new clothes and maybe a stereo."

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